ISSUE 31/NOVEMBER 1983

Different Worlds

THE MAGAZINE FOR ADVENTURE ROLE-PLAYERS

$3.00

AUSTRALIA $3.95

SPECIAL FANTASY ISSUE

Different Views

Letters and comments should be sent to Different Views, PO Box 6302, Albany CA 94706.

Issue 29 Reviewed

Has Chaosium's meddling in the affairs of Cthulhu finally aroused the wrath of that dark horror? It seems that the curse has been directed at *Different Worlds*.

I was terribly disappointed at the content of issue 29. With the exception of "*Ringworld* Preview," I found little worthwhile reading in this issue. The "how I did it" articles on campaign creation and world-building were slightly interesting, but not enough so to have the majority of the magazine devoted to them.

Even so, I probably would not have minded so much if there had been some of the fantastic game reviews which are my main reason for subscribing to *DW*. In the past, it has been the policy of *DW* to review between five and seven new game releases. Issue 29 only offered three. Was it really necessary to take up three pages to review TSR's *Star Frontiers* and *Gangbusters*, as well as another full page for *Starfleet Battles*? I would have rather seen reviews of new products (*Star Frontiers* has been out for a year, now). Even the "Quick Plugs" section was terribly lacking.

Now, about the "Metal Marvels" review of Grenadier's *AD&D* blister packs. Once again, the article was outdated. The miniatures reviewed are no longer in production, thanks to the split between Grenadier and TSR.

I hope the next issue of *DW* will be more consistent to the quality that has been established in the past.

Don Wellman
Quincy IL

I hope so too. —*Editor*

Selling of the Jedi

In response to John Nubbin's review of *Return of the Jedi* (*DW 29*), I feel that I really must disagree.

It seem Mr. Nubbin is overly concerned with the merchandising aspect of the *Star Wars* films. Perhaps he feels obligated by his position of "public arbiter of good taste, effects, and intelligent character development" to scorn all such offspring. The success of these products surely must indicate a market of persons desiring these products.

Merchandising also performs another important function—it supplies the necessary dollars for technical advancements, such as the ones Mr. Nubbin dislikes in *Jedi*. All these new techniques and developments benefit the entire film industry.

I do hope Mr. Nubbin does not reject a future film, one more to his liking, on the basis that those FX (effects) he admires so much were originally created by Lucas' "dirty money."

Trish Ledoux
Modesto CA

From Across the Great Water

King Sebspa II commands me to send greetings and prays this finds you in good health and spirits. I have also been instructed to bid welcome and encouragement to the International Fantasy Gaming Society's earnest attempts to translate table top fantasy role-playing into real life.

Here at Peckforton Castle in Cheshire, England, we have created our own realm with King and Court and Guilds, giving a basic structure of 'political' intrigue around which we plan adventures and quests varying in length from 3-24 hours within the castle itself and weekend and fortnight long wilderness adventures set anywhere in Britain. We have 1700 members drawn from all over the world.

The I.F.G.S. games system as described in *DW 28* has some similarities to our own, the major differences being as follows:

The Combat Scoring System takes into account the varying conditions of normal daylight, dungeon darkness, outdoor and indoor in our 150 room 'Norman' castle.

The Combat System, where the monsters use colour-coded water (washable dye) on their weapons (which include safe arrows).

The Political System is a well-developed court and a series of guilds and clans representing each class of character and their group allegiance. Whilst they are in the castle, each member must remain in character and participate in palace intrigue. The only safety lies in the sleeping quarters (where we supply the best quality straw) or when we organize special events—barroom brawls, manhunt, defender, festivals, etc.

Non-Player Characters. Each member is encouraged to play various roles defined as 'monsters' within our system.

Character Progression is by adventuring in 'level' dungeons alternated with Guild tests rather than a subjective experience point system. If the referee does not consider a character to have played their role then no progression is made. Guild tests are often "succeed or die" tests.

Range Of Scenarios. Although our activities are currently based on medieval fantasy, we are at present engaged in the active development of a futuristic scenario and hope to open a 'Space Centre' in one of Britain's major cities in the near future. Meanwhile, we are proceeding with the planning stages of Greco-Roman, English Civil War, Stone Age, Wild West, Samurai, Spy, World War, After The Cataclysm, Thriller, and Secret Societies scenarios.

Trying Us Out. Although we are a private club, we offer non-members the opportunity to try out our 'Basic' adventure for only £10 ($15) this is deductable from our membership fee should an application be accepted.

Further details can be obtained from: D.J. Hewitt, Treasure Trap, Peckforton Castle, Peckforton, Nr Tarporley, Cheshire, UK. Tel. Bunbury (0829) 260876.

David J. Hewitt
Cheshire, UK

Love Letter

I hate *Different Worlds*. I hate everything about the magazine; except for one very special exception—I am madly in love with Miss D'Arn. Please, won't you give me her address or phone number? I've written to her via the magazine, but I never get answers. How about her real name? I'll search the country for her.

(Name withheld)
Spokane WA

Gigi regrets she has but one life to give to the role-playing hobby and that is as a gossip columnist; and for that she must remain absolutely anonymous. She would like to share her belief that the greatest love in the world is the one that is most secret. —*Editor*

Rational But Not Physical

I greatly enjoyed Arlen P. Walker's essay "Pandora: Rational World Creation" (*DW 29*). I am a long-standing enthusiast of incorporating applied physics into game and campaign design; I found Walker's basic approach sound, and picked up several ideas that went beyond my own gleanings from astronomy texts in useful and interesting ways.

I regret to say that Mr. Walker made one significant error in his world construction. In calculating surface temperature for his proposed world, he applies a ratio of 0.93, derived from solar output and orbital radius, to Earth's surface temperature of 15 Celsius, obtaining a result of 14 Celsius. The problem is that the equation he uses is intended to work in degrees Kelvin (degrees above absolute zero, a universally significant measurement) rather than in degrees Celsius (degrees above melting point of hydrogen oxide, a matter of purely local concern).

Recomputing by the correct method goes as follows. First, convert from Celsius to Kelvin, by adding 273; thus, 15 Celsius equals 288 Kelvin. Second, multiply the ratio previously derived; 298 Kelvin times .93 equals 268 Kelvin. Finally, subtract 273 to convert back to Celsius, or well below freezing. I suspect that the planet's icecaps would be rather larger than Walker suggested.

W.H. Stoddard
Chula Vista CA

Sorry we didn't catch the error. —*Editor*

Scaling Judges Guild

When I queried Judges Guild about scale for their campaign hex system, they said that the large (full-page) hex was 5 miles. This means each small hex was 0.2 miles. However, if this scale is applied to the village and castle books, the smallest hut is 250' by 300'. Many houses fill a 1000' hex, and some are over a half-mile in length.

To make the scale more reasonable, I would decrease all scales by a factor of ten (making small hexes about 100'). To make a hex 50' would probably make buildings closer to ancient standards, but the larger scale is fine for multi- or extended family dwellings.

Diane E. Grier
Prt Angeles WA

Running Joke

When are we going to see Eric Goldberg's review of *Stormbringer*? □

Nat Wilkins
Quincy MA

When we see it. —*Editor*

Editorial

Different Worlds

THE RETURN OF "MY LIFE & ROLE-PLAYING"

When I first started *Different Worlds* I needed something that would catch people's attention, something that said this magazine was special. The idea I came up with was to get all the game designers and magazine editors in the hobby—people who provide us with the products that we enjoy—to share with us their experiences in role-playing gaming. I also needed a lot of publishable material quickly.

I wrote a letter to all the role-playing game designers and all the adventure gaming magazine editors I could think of, asking them to contribute to the premier issue of *Different Worlds* by writing an article about their experiences with role-playing games—how they got started, how the hobby changed their lives, how their families felt about it all, etc.

There were only 40 or so of them back in 1979, and except for E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson, all were relatively unknown. I received thirteen responses, all insightful and all fascinating. The articles were all published and we got to get a more personal insight into the designer's motives. I was surprised that as many responded, but then they were promised a lifetime subscription to *DW* if they came through—I guess that was enough incentive for many, though not enough for those that chose not to participate, however.

I published two more "My Life & Role-Playing" columns the second issue, and two more the third issue. The project died after that; I do not know why, it was one of *DW*'s most popular features. It led to a *DW* policy of spotlighting people and not just the game systems, a policy that helped create a popular conception of the personalities in the role-playing field. Without *DW* many of the game designers in this field would be just another name on the cover of a role-playing game—faceless, unknown, and without personality.

With my return in *DW 30* I wanted the magic to start all over again and vowed to have each issue spotlight at least one gaming personality who would tell his or her story. Afterall, most designers only become famous by writing a "My Life & Role-Playing" column.

And they invariably have fascinating stories to tell. I hope you will enjoy this feature of *DW*.

Happy gaming,

Tadashi Ehara

Coming next issue:
Special Primitive Cultures Issue

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Subscription Information: A one-year (six-issue) subscription in the U.S. is $15. Foreign subscriptions are $22 by surface mail, $33 by air. The number next to the subscriber's name on the mailing envelope is the last issue of the subscription. For address changes send new address, old address, and date effective.

Staff: Tadashi Ehara editor. Yurek Chodak art director. Lynn Willis, Greg Stafford, Steve Perrin, Sandy Petersen, Ken Rolston, John T. Sapienza, Jr. associate editors. Charlie Krank, Sherman Kahn, Gigi D'Arn contributing editors.

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PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

Special Fantasy Feature

Illustrated by Mike Mignola

Cover Feature

The Sunstone Multiverse

A Cosmology for Pantheistic Worlds

By W. Glenn Kirkconnell

Towards the end of wizard Sogar Xana-a's long and illustrious career, he found himself master and guardian of a small fief straddling the Sunstone Mountains, an area where many cultures and religions meet. Being something of a religious eclectic, Sogar brought gods from a half dozen different mythologies, including his native Greek, Hindu, and Mitraic, into his tiny kingdom. This resulted in the presence of at least six different cosmologies and metaphysics in his land, all supported by highly partisan and empassioned exponents. Priests from the different groups debated with tract and mace over whether Ptah or Vishnu created the universe. Anarchy spread.

To bring order to the chaos, Sogar attempted to produce a uniform cosmology and metaphysics. While his system may not be perfect, it does provide an interesting glimpse at how Sogar's world appears to those inside it.

Before there was a world or anything else, there was Light. The Light was pure, having no part of Darkness within it. It was of One part, a harmonious Unity. Being without limit, it was formless, and being formless, it was changeless. For how could it be limited, since it was prior to all else? Nothing existed to limit it. And how could it change, with no form to change from? So the Light was all, and its nature was Unity, Harmony, Eternity.

The light shined, but its shining was empty, since nothing existed to shine for. The Light therefore created the multiverse, so as to be able to shine upon it. It refracted itself into colors, and each color had some part of the nature of the Light. These the Higher Planes; the Seven Heavens have the purest part Light, and it tapers in a spectrum into Nirvana and Olympus. From these colors sprang the Immortal Gods, called Blessed because they are constantly in the Light, and it always shines upon them. It warms them and lights their way, and they are thus always blessed with Happiness and Truth.

So this was the creation of the Higher World. The Gods existed in the Light and knew neither Cold nor Darkness. These things did not exist, for they have no

part of Light. Folly, which springs from a darkened mind, and Malice, which dwells in a cold heart, have no part in the Gods whose nature and life is in the Light. But Wisdom, which comes from an enlightened mind, and Kindness, which lives in the warm heart, are attributes of the Gods and of the Light itself.

The Light shines upon the Higher World and the gods for their good. The Higher World casts a shadow; thus Darkness came into being. Darkness is all that the Light is not. It is cold, and draws the warmth which is the Life of all. It is Folly which darkens the mind, and Malice which makes the heart cold. It cannot see a good thing without wanting to make it bad, and cannot see a bad thing without wanting to make it worse. It is therefore Chaos and Evil. Its nature is most clearly seen in the Abyss, where the Darkness is deepest.

The Higher Planes sprang into being as a manifestation of the Light, and gods also manifest that part of the Light, that Higher Sphere, from which they were born. The elder gods are personal manifestations of the sphere from which they take their being. The gods came together in love and begat the younger gods, and the higher world was filled. And the higher world cast a greater shadow; thus Darkness grew. For as the sage Skoteinos said, there is a unity to all things, each with its opposite. The Light refracted itself so that there could be good things. There would be no wisdom, or kindness, if there was no one to be wise or kind. But things cast shadows, and bring their opposites into being. Folly is the opposite of wisdom, and exists as its shadow. These things have I heard from the sage who dwells in the gardens of Artemis.

Thus there is a great chain of Being; and the multiverse is not a circle (as it has been drawn) but an ellipse. At the highest point is the Light, pure and holy. From it emanates the many colors of the higher planes, each shading into the other. Below them are their shadows, and furthest from the Light is the utter Darkness of the Abyss. Where all the colors shade into each other is the grey plane, Concordant Opposition.

Just as the gods were born from the Light, so also did the Darkness give birth to the sons of Darkness, the demons and other infernal creatures. These personify that from which they sprang; their hearts are cold and dark, their minds clouded. Envy, folly, and cruelty are behind all their thoughts. So they war upon the Light and servants of the Light, the blessed immortal gods. Such

was their envy, their malice, and their folly.

Darkness has no creative power; only the Light does. So the sons of Darkness attacked the Light and stole a part; from this they fashioned a wall to hide themselves. This wall is the material world. They fashioned it from a piece of the Light which they stole, the body of a dead god who fell fighting to defend it, and the slain demons found lying around him. They built a world of night and ice and windblast plains. The very air froze solid like ice or flowed in rivers. Parts of this world remain; I myself have traveled there. No thing could live there, nor did the Darkness desire that any should. It was a wall for the demons to hide behind, and it placed a great gulf between the Darkness and the Light.

The sons of Light attacked the wall the sons of Darkness had built. The gods penetrated the wall and holed it; thus Light entered our world, giving life to that which had been lifeless. Much of the world warmed and became habitable. The Light entered into part of the world which had been Light before, but which had been conquered. This part became alive, creeping and crawling and swimming and flying throughout the world. Thus were the animals created. And when the Light shines most fully in such a being, it is born an elf, they who guard the forests with wisdom and magic. These return always to the world, living and breathing on what once was dead, and being once dead themselves. Nine-tenths of them is dead always, as with all things called mortal. But they live while the Light is in them, and return again to lifeless matter when the Light leaves them. Their Light returns to its plane for a time, and then returns again to this world. Therefore are all beings with "spirits" reincarnated.

When the gods found the body of the dead god Purusha, they wove a special conjuration. They found his body lifeless and torn in pieces, scattered throughout the world. Many pieces were mingled with baser elements. The gods invoked the Light to enter the fragments of Purusha, and it entered into some and gave them life. Those most heavily mingled with earth became dwarves or gnomes; others became halflings, and those with the least earth within them became humans. When any of these is born, the Light enters into another piece of Purusha and gives it life. If that being comes to the end of its time having followed the Light during his days, another piece of Purusha enters into the Light. If all the pieces could be united, the dead god would rise again.

A piece of Purusha is a being which is said to have a soul. It does not return to this world normally, since it is different from those who have spirits. It was a god once, and when it comes to the end of its days, it goes to Light or Darkness. If it goes to Light, it is welcomed by the gods as a lost friend; if it goes to Darkness, it is seized by the demons and is imprisoned, to prevent Purusha from rising. It in no case returns to this world, except by a Reincarnation spell.

When the demons saw the attack by the gods bringing Light into the world, they mingled the essence of their Darkness with the world and gave it motion. As the gods and goddesses had mingled in love with each other and the world, so also did the demons come together with each other and the world, although not in love. Love is of the Light; Hate and Lust are from Darkness. From the rape of the world, monsters were born. Tiamat laid her eggs and produced the evil dragons. Elves were taken in violence by the demons, and Darkness entered into the nature of the descendants. If what I have written is

considered mere fable, here is the proof: I myself have fought the Drow, though they be said to be merely legend. I have defeated them and slain many, captured prisoners, destroyed their demon goddess, and plundered their wealth for the sons of Light who dwell beneath the Sun. Thanks be to Athena!

Darkness entered into all facets of the world, perverting and corrupting that which it touched. The demons pursued the elves particularly since more Light is in them than other creatures with spirits. And they pursue the men and their kin and tempt them down the paths of Darkness, so the dead god Purusha may not be assembled.

Now, when a human or demi-human dies, his afterlife is a continuation of the journey which they pursued in life. If he pursued the ways of Light, practicing kindness, wisdom, truth, and peace, he will enter into the Light of the blessed gods. If Darkness was his goal in life, then to howling Darkness he goes. If he pursued neither Light nor Darkness, then he goes to the plane of shadows, Concordant Opposition.

Those with spirits continue in the birth-death-rebirth cycle unless they transcend it by apotheosis; and long indeed is the road to godhood. But those who have souls go to their reward until the end of time, when either the children of Light or Darkness shall conquer and claim all souls wherever they be.

So this is our situation. Our world is like the walls of Troy where great Achilles fought. The beseigers rush the wall and try to fight over and through it to the enemy—they infiltrate the wall and take up positions among the defenses of the enemy. The elements are like the bricks of the fortress, and the ether like the mortar between the bricks. On either side of the wall are the advance forces of the two armies. These are the positive and negative material planes, where Light and Darkness have reached out and touched matter, converting a portion to a substance very like their own natures but also kin to the material. Through these planes of Light and Darkness each can effect the material world, and all the Inner Planes, directly.

Gods and anti-gods have rarely fought since the world began, since each side is saving its strength for the Final Days, when demons, giants, rakshasas, and all the hordes of Darkness shall fight to the last against the gods and their legions. Each side prepares for that final day by probing, attacking, feinting, and conquering using its forces available on the inner planes. In this way, each side can build up its forces and weaken its enemy's position without seriously jeopardizing its own.

So the creatures of the Inner Planes can and often do call upon the powers of Light or Darkness, as each seeks to win another part of the world for its side. Each side offers guidance and power to the creature, hoping that its soul or spirit will fight for them at the Final Battle. A hero unconsciously draws on these powers, and they aid him, give him greater strength, and guide him to some degree. Consider the mighty barbarian hero, Conan. He had not only great physical strength, but had an almost certainly supernatural resistance to magic, and an incredible awareness of his world which allowed him to avoid blows and traps. I cite him as an example of one who received the aid of the Light without consciously calling on such aid. Conan served the god Mitra, Lord of Light, while neither worshipping him nor desireing to follow Good and Law. His mighty strivings brought him into contact with the Light and made him a power for Good. Darkness, also, lends power to men, and a creature can draw from either or both at different times without realizing it.

It is those who fully and consciously draw on the powers of Light or Darkness who makes clearest the relationship between us and the two great Powers. These are the spell casters, and their power is of three types. The first draw on the power which the gods and great demons transmit to their servants. The gods and anti-gods directly draw on the powers of Light and Darkness, but such power would destroy most creatures of the inner planes if one were to directly encounter it. Each Higher Plane contains a great amount of power due to its constitution from either the One Light or the Darkness. Those beings from planes not wholly Light or Darkness, such as Limbo, of course do not have as much positive power available as a being from the Seven Heavens, or as much negative energy to draw from as does a demon. But a creature from such a plane can draw from both positive and negative energies; hence the balance of power between planes is roughly equal. The gods and anti-gods can draw on this power directly, and transmit it to their servants and worshippers. This is the magic of clerics, which is technically referred to as "miracle-working."

The second form of magic comes from the powers of the world itself. As we have seen, this world is made of Light and also Darkness. So the world has great power contained within it due to its origin, although not so much as the Outer Planes. The heat and light of the sun, for example, is a manifestation of the One Light. The attractive power of the planets manifest the power of Love which drew the first gods and goddesses together. Cold draws its power from Darkness. Storms, floods, and lightning all show the innate power of the world. Much of this power is locked away, but can be tapped by one adept in such things. Certain gods and goddesses can aid in such conjurations, but essentially it is a matter of reaching out to tap the powers of Light and Darkness which constitute the Elemental and Prime Material planes. This is the magic called "druidism." It is not the same as the power of certain deities to affect Nature, for as we have seen, gods draw power from the Outer Planes. Nor is it the same as miracle-working, for the Gods do not transmit power from outside the world to within it. It is rather a worldly magic requiring an entirely different explanation than that given for clerical dweomercraefting.

The third form is that practiced by magicians and illusionists, and is "magic" in the strictest

sense. As we saw, Light and Darkness each have a plane where they have established themselves almost totally, making matter Light or Darkness again. The Light and Darkness is not pure, but also material; hence creatures can traffic with it with less aid from the gods than can one wishing to use the purer power of the Outer Planes. This power is, however, exceedingly great, as great or greater than that given to mortals by the gods. Since this power is so great, and aid from the gods less, one must use great care when tapping it. This is the reason that wizards and illusionists must practice great self-discipline, studying long years while neglecting the martial arts. The adept uses the knowledge and discipline he has learned to tap the power of Light or Darkness contained in the Positive and Negative material planes.

Our speculations have now also made clear the way white and black magic can affect the adept. This is seen most clearly in miracle-working. When a cleric casts a raise dead spell, for example, power from the Light flows through his body to perform the good deed. It is as if fresh water were allowed to flow through an aqueduct. Some of the impurities are washed away from the adept by the power flowing through him, and some of the good remains, just as a few drops of fresh water might remain in a tube after the flow has been cut off. For this reason, the most evil of deities, who partake most fully of Darkness, cannot themselves perform any healing spells. The Darkness within them, which is the source of their power, would be diluted if they let the Light come into them in this way.

In the reverse case, a Slay Living spell, the power of Darkness flows through the adept, leaving a stain on his psyche as surely as a brackish stream leaves a trace of impurity where it has flowed. Light is energy, as is life; Darkness is anti-energy, and essentially anti-life as we understand it. Anti-energy is power to destroy and harm life; hence Darkness can take life more readily than give it. So the cleric casting a Slay Living spell taps the Darkness to perform the miracle.

As a second example, consider the spell of Animate Dead, usable by adepts of two differing schools. Undead draw their power from the negative material plane, as all know. The Darkness in zombies and skeletons is small because the power needed to sustain them is small; more power is needed to sustain those undead with free will. But the creation of a zombie always means tapping Darkness to some degree; and this Darkness

must enter into and flow through the adept, thus polluting him to some degree. For this reason, a paladin, who must be totally pure, cannot create a zombie at all.

The paladin is, of course, an exceptional case, as he is not a true adept, but rather gains magical powers through his extreme discipline and purity. For a true adept training is at least as important as discipline, and hence an occasional brush with a normally forbidden power is not so disasterous. For this reason, a good cleric may, under certain circumstances, perform the miracle of Slaying the Living and suffer no more painful repercussions than the need for some sort of ritual cleansing or atonement. And evil clerics often perform healing miracles if doing so will bring greater evil into the world in the long run.

Many miracles, for example "hold person," have no inherent tint one way or another. In such cases, the adept draws from whatever power he is accustomed to drawing on. A black cleric draws from a Darkness plane, while a white cleric draws on Light to perform the same spell.

In the same way, an adept performing a Fireball spell draws from either the positive or negative material plane, depending on which he habitually draws from for his spells. A neutral magic-user may draw from either, depending upon the situation and the unconscious leanings of his heart at the time.

I believe that these investigations can also explain why non-humans seem to have inherent limitations on their spell-casting abilities. A detailed discussion is out of place here, since here we are attempting to understand the origins of the universe and the workings of magic, not about the particularities of racial restrictions. Briefly stated, the origins of dwarfs, gnomes, and halflings from the fragments of the god Purusha which were mingled with other elements is such that their divine nature, and hence their magical power, is diluted; in fact, they are somewhat magic-repellent. The elves, by contrast, are innately sorcerous, being more fully Light than these others. They are born of the Light, while we with souls are born of a god who was born of the Light, and hence are a further generation removed from the source of all Power. But the elves have discovered that, just as it is not best to seek to control the flow of a river while standing in the middle of it, exposed to the full strength of its current, so also is it difficult for those who stand so close to the Light to bend it to their will. So, while it requires less discipline for an elf to practice magic (hence their multi-class abilities) than it does for a human, it is more difficult for them to progress beyond the Sorcerer class.

SUMMARY

To understand magic, we must understand the origins of the universe; and the reverse is also true. While there are three distinct types of magic, they all involve tapping the inherent power of Light and Darkness, the powers which make up all aspect of the multiverse. The multiverse came from energy, and is still alive with the power which constituted it. By tapping this power, the adept can manipulate many parts of the multiverse. This tapping leaves its mark on the psyche, which is itself energy; but so do many other actions which may also contribute to determine whether a being is permanently influenced towards Light or Dark. At the end of worldly life, the soul or spirit of material creatures goes to that Outer Plane which most closely corresponds to the tint of Light or Darkness it picked up in life, both through its conscious and unconscious actions. □

The Cup Of Death

Special Fantasy Feature

Poisons for Use in Fantasy Role-Playing Campaigns

By Larry DiTillio

Illustrated by Brad W. Foster

There will eventually come a time in any fantasy role-playing campaign when the gamemaster or players desire to use some form of poison. Most systems has poison rules, but they usually only describe the mechanics of poison use as opposed to an actual list of poisons and their specific effects. Furthermore, even these mechanics boil down to an all-or-nothing proposition in most cases (i.e., the poison takes effect, does massive damage immediately, and the adventure goes on). This method turns poisons into something akin to a blow from a weapon, rather than the subtle and devious form of death it should be.

In an effort to give poisons a little color and variation, the following provides a set of specific toxins for use in any fantasy role-playing game system. These deadly substances may kill quickly or slowly, disable a victim for a period of time, or cause permanent changes in characteristics.

POISON TYPES

Poisons come in three basic varieties: "Swallowed" must be consumed orally to have effect; "Injective" requires a cut in the skin or the prick of a needle to deliver their effects; and "Contact" must be touched by bare flesh.

POISON USE

Rampant use of poisons can quickly unbalance a game so the gamemaster must keep tight control of all poisons allowed in a particular game. The average character should not be able to recognize poisons unless he/she has previously been exposed to it in game play and definitely should not be able to sit down and whip up a batch of lethal liquid whenever he/she pleases. Exceptions may be made in the case of assassins and alchemists, but once again no character should know every poison available. By randomizing, a gamemaster can give an assassin/alchemist or other character types with poison lore knowledge a "core" group of toxins which he/she knows full detail of. Any others, the character will have to study up on.

Poison effects listed here are for humans. It is up to the gamemaster to decided whether and how they will affect non-humans. Normal creatures such as cats, dogs, horses, etc., should have the same effects, and trolls, elves, dwarves, etc., will undoubtedly have different though similar effects. On the other hand, blobs of flying metal-eating jelly and huge dragons will probably laugh at even the deadliest toxin.

POISON CHARACTERISTICS

Regardless of the type, all poisons are described in the same manner:

BEGINS AFFECT: This refers to how soon after a poison is swallowed or injected or touched it affects the victim. It is given in terms of a random number of seconds, minutes, hours, or days (e.g., 1D6 minutes, 2D20 hours, etc.).

PRICE: This is the cost per dose of the poison. All prices are in gold pieces, equating a gold piece with one U.S. dollar. The gamemaster should alter the price to fit his/her world's monetary system.

RUNS COURSE: This refers to how long a poison continues to affect a victim once the poison begins its effect. It too is given in terms of a random amount of time.

DAMAGE: How much damage to constitution/hit points a poison does. Damage listings are of two types: flat rated poisons do the indicated amount of damage once and no more (i.e., "5D6 flat" means the poison will do 5-30 points of damage once); variable rated poisons do the indicated amount of damage periodically until the poison runs its course (i.e., 3D6 per hour).

DOSE: This is the basic amount of poison necessary to achieve the listed effects. For dosages other than the basic amount, pro-rate all effects (i.e., three times the basic dose does three times the damage, half the dose will do half the damage).

BASE: This is simply whether the poison has a mineral, animal, or vegetable origin. The gamemaster should create a list of the specific mineral, animal, or plant as befits the environment of his/her world.

ODOR: What the poison smells like in raw or mixed form. If none is listed, the poison is basically odorless.

FORM: This is the raw form of a poison—what it tastes like mixed and what color it turns in a mixer. For injective poisons, it also refers to whether it noticeably discolors the instrument it is applied to.

SYMPTOMS: What happens to the victim physically. The gamemaster may add other symptoms if he/she wishes.

AVAILABILITY: How often a character might find the poison for sale. There are three categories: "Wide" poisons are found in appropriate places 75% of the time; "Average" poisons are found 50% of the time; "Rare" poisons are found only 10% of the time.

SAVING ROLL: This refers to modifiers to any saving rolls allowed against poison effects. If the listing is a positive number, it means that the number is added to the character's saving roll; if it is a negative number, it is subtracted (for percentile system, consider +1 to be +5%, +2 to be +10%, etc.). If it is listed as "None," it means no saving roll is allowed.

POISON LEVELS

Poisons are characterized by the respective deadliness and skill required to manufacture them. This is denoted by a level system which is as follows:

Level	*Type*	*Skill level*	
1	Common poisons	01-40%	(40%)
2	Less common poisons	41-59%	(19%)
3	Somewhat rare poisons	60-75%	(16%)
4	Rare poisons	76-89%	(14%)
5	Very rare poisons	90-95%	(6%)
6	Exotic poisons	96-100%	(5%)

Skill levels indicate the level of poison lore the toxins fit into for games using the percentile system. A character at a certain level of poison expertise is assumed to be able to make all lower level poison, assuming he/she has the proper ingredients and facility.

For systems which require poison potency factors, use this simple rule of thumb: potency equals 3D6 plus level number.

Examples of how to apply poisons are given at the beginning of each list of toxins. In addition, when a character is poisoned, the gamemaster should not state how much damage is incurred, but rather use the listed symptoms to alert the character and apply the damage in a secretive manner.

EXAMPLE: *Agrat the Thief gets pricked by a poison needle containing Uleva, a slow-acting level 3 injective poison. Agrat probably figures he might be poisoned but he does not know how badly, and since Uleva acts over 1D6 hours, he might live for some time. The gamemaster rolls 2 hours, so the poison will affect Agrat for the next two hours. Uleva does 2D20 damage an hour. The roll for the first hour damage is 18; the gamemaster may either take the entire 18 points at the end of the hour or take one point every three minutes or so—it is up to the gamemaster to determine how the damage is taken. As the damage mounts, the gamemaster should simply tell Agrat that the burning sensation in his chest is growing stronger, he feels more nauseous, and his vision is getting progressively hazier. This keeps Agrat guessing, and, more enjoyably, sweating!*

The previous method requires a bit of bookkeeping but since poison will most often victimize individual targets, it is not overwhelming and adds greatly to the sense of danger and mystery in a game.

Since poisons are generally fatal, the gamemaster should use it sparingly and give characters ample chance to detect it. The same dictum applies to use of poisons by player-characters against non-player characters. Antidotes, other than use of magic, should also be available.

POISON GAS

All of the swallowed poisons may be turned into gaseous form by a knowledgeable alchemist of at least level 3 ability.

Since gas is a more concentrated form of poison, it will act faster and become more lethal than the usual swallowed version. As a rule of thumb, figure gas begins its affect in half the time and does maximum damage—unless a saving throw is made. Such damage is applied to all caught in the gas cloud individually.

Injective poisons cannot be made into gas.

Contact poisons may be made into gas if the gamemaster so desires. Also a spray of contact is possible, taking affect as long as it touches flesh. Contact poison gas need not be breathed—as long as it settles on bare flesh, it will do the job.

EXAMPLE: *Six characters are hit with a cloud of Albor gas. It will begin affecting them in 1D10 minutes divided by two (it acts twice as fast) and will do 6 points of damage a minute to each character. Since everybody gets the same whiff, only one roll for how long the gas continues to do damage is necessary. However, any character making a saving roll will incur only 3 points of damage per minute.*

FINAL WORD

Let players learn names of poisons and their effects by experience and exploration rather than just telling them what a poison is called. Sages, herbalists, assassin organizations, and alchemists are all likely sources for information and smart players who survive poisoning will probably note symptoms and make inquiries. After a few brushes with these cups of death, you should have a fairly paranoid group of players, wary of the slightest anomaly in any food, drink, or material they encounter. Have fun!

SWALLOWED POISONS

These poisons must be ingested. Lobbing vials of these poisons like hand grenades will be an unlikely tactic at best, whereas poisoning rations and leaving them in a monster's path may very well succeed.

Price and rarity of the deadliest poisons should keep their use under control.

EXAMPLE: *Tandro the Mighty, a highly-vaunted adventurer, has recently returned from pillaging the temple of the evil scorpion god Maru. Tandro is regaling the patrons of a city tavern with tales of killing the scropion god's priests. Drinks are flowing mightily and Tandro accepts a goblet from the hand of an admirer.*

As he begins to drink, the gamemaster asks Tandro's player to make a saving roll based on his I.Q., with appropriate minuses due to Tandro's drunkenness. The player misses the save so Tandro does not notice that his ale has a slightly vinegary smell to it. As Tandro drinks, the gamemaster calls for yet another save on his I.Q. and this time Tandro notices that the ale tastes somewhat vinegary and has a noxious reddish hue to it. He decides the ale in this tavern stinks, spills the remaining half of it on to the floor, and strides out in search for a better watering hole.

The gamemaster judges that Tandro has swallowed at least one dose of Gopal (since the disguised priest who handed Tandro the goblet inserted three doses). He rolls a 1D10 and comes up with a 4, so in four minutes, Tandro will begin to feel the poison (his temples will ache, he will be nauseous, and his fingers will swell up). The gamemaster rolls 3D10 and comes up with a 17, so the poison will affect Tandro for 17 minutes. The gamemaster now rolls 6D6 and comes up with a 28. Dividing 28 by 18 (the Gopal does flat damage) the gamemaster finds that the poison will do 2-3 points of damage each minute. Tandro cannot withstand more than 20 points of damage so he will be dead in about ten minutes.

Fortunately, fate smiles on the warrior and Tandro makes his saving throw, halving the damage. Tandro must now take only 14 points of damage, less than 1 each minute. He will survive the poisoning. Unfortunately, two priests of the scorpion god were waiting to waylay the warrior and they strike some eight minutes after he drank the poison, enough time for the poison to take effect. Tandro tries to draw his sword but his swollen fingers cause him to drop it. The murderous priests set upon him with daggers.

Now if Tandro should survive (perhaps a comrade arrives in the nick of time to beat the priests off), he will have some experience with Gopal, experience which may stand him in good stead in the future. At the very least, he will watch who is handing him drinks!

Level 1 Poisons

IKRIN

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D8 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 2D20 minutes.
DAMAGE: 5D8 flat.
DOSE: ½ gram.
PRICE: 2 gold pieces.
BASE: Mineral.
ODOR: None.
FORM: Grey powder. No color when mixed. Tastes slightly bitter and metallic.
SYMPTOMS: Increasing shortness of breath, dry and bitter taste in throat, slight reddening of the eyes.
AVAILABILITY: Average.
SAVING ROLL: +2. If saving roll is successful, poison still does half damage.

GOPAL

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D10 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 3D10 minutes.
DAMAGE: 6D6 flat.
DOSE: 1 gram.
PRICE: 3 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: Slightly vinegary.
FORM: Light red liquid or tablet. Tastes vinegary. Adds slight reddish color when mixed.
SYMPTOMS: Swelling of fingers, ache in temples, nausea. May reduce dexterity in regards to weapon use.
AVAILABILITY: Wide.
SAVING ROLL: +1. If saving roll is successful, poison still does half damage.

OLAP

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D6 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 1D8 minutes.
DAMAGE: 1D6 per minute.
DOSE: ½ gram.
PRICE: 15 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: None.
FORM: Syrupy dark liquid. No color when mixed. Tasteless.
SYMPTOMS: Shortness of breath, burning sensation in chest and lungs, tingling of extremities.
AVAILABILITY: Average.
SAVING ROLL: None.

AEDRIBAS

BEGINS AFFECT: 2D6 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 4D6 hours.
DAMAGE: 8D6 flat.
DOSE: 2 grams.
PRICE: 5 gold pieces.
BASE: Animal.
ODOR: Flowery-sweet.
FORM: Green gel. No color when mixed. Tastes slightly sweet.
SYMPTOMS: Feverish feeling, hazing of vision.
AVAILABILITY: Wide.
SAVING ROLL: -1. If saving roll is successful, poison still does half damage.

SPIDER BERRY

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D20 seconds.
RUNS COURSE: 3D10 minutes.
DAMAGE: 1D3 per minute.
DOSE: 1 gram.
PRICE: 20 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: None.
FORM: Wine-colored liquid. No color when mixed. Tastes somewhat like blueberries.
SYMPTOMS: Partial paralysis of all limbs, numbing of lips and tongue, slight swelling of throat glands.
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: -2. If saving roll is successful, poison still does half damage.

TILI

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D4 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 1D20 minutes.
DAMAGE: 5D4 flat.
DOSE: 1 gram.
PRICE: 2 gold pieces.
BASE: Mineral.
ODOR: Lemony.
FORM: Off-white powder with black specks. Tastes like lemon. No color when mixed.
SYMPTOMS: Violent coughing, shortness of breath.
AVAILABILITY: Wide.
SAVING ROLL: None.

Level 2 Poisons

ALBOR

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D10 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 5D10 minutes.
DAMAGE: 1D6 per minute.
DOSE: ½ gram.
PRICE: 10 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: None.
FORM: Clear liquid. Tastes slightly salty, darkens color of what it is mixed with.
SYMPTOMS: Hot and cold flashes. Paralysis of vocal chords (makes verbal spellcasting impossible) within first five minutes of effect that lasts until poison runs course.
AVAILABILITY: Average.
SAVING ROLL: -3. If saving roll is successful, poison still does half damage.

DRILLWEED

BEGINS AFFECT: 3D6 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 1D4 hours.
DAMAGE: 10D6 flat.
DOSE: 1 gram.
PRICE: 20 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: Herbal scent.
FORM: Crushed brownish leaf. Tastes "planty" like lettuce. Leaf does not dissolve in liquid.
SYMPTOMS: Violent headaches, makes concentration virtually impossible due to pain. Possible brain damage—lose 1 I.Q. point for every 6 points of damage taken.
AVAILABILITY: Average.
SAVING ROLL: None.

IRON ALE

BEGINS AFFECT: 5D6 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 3D8 minutes.
DAMAGE: 2D6 per minute.
DOSE: 2 grams.
PRICE: 25 gold pieces.
BASE: Mineral.
ODOR: Dried beer.
FORM: Light amber liquid. Tastes like ale with slight metallic aftertaste. Will color any substance lighter in color than itself.
SYMPTOMS: Nausea, vomiting, stomach pain.
AVAILABILITY: Wide.
SAVING ROLL: -2. If saving roll is successful, poison still does half damage.

ZHINTO

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D8 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 5D6 minutes.
DAMAGE: 1D4 per minute.
DOSE: ½ gram.
PRICE: 15 gold pieces.
BASE: Animal.
ODOR: Slightly fishy.
FORM: Silvery oil. Fishy taste. No color when mixed.
SYMPTOMS: Shortness of breath, loss of equilibrium, pain in lower back.
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: None.

MAGORAN
BEGINS AFFECT: 1D6 hours.
RUNS COURSE: 2D6 hours.
DAMAGE: 1D20 per hour.
DOSE: ½ gram.
PRICE: 35 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: None.
FORM: Small yellowish tablet. Dissolves almost instantaneously in liquid. Tasteless. Colorless.
SYMPTOMS: Akin to ptomaine: nausea, stomach pains, sweating.
AVAILABILITY: Average.
SAVING ROLL: -3. If saving roll is successful, poison still does half damage.

GREEN LOTUS
BEGINS AFFECT: 1D4 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 2D8 minutes.
DAMAGE: 8D6 flat.
DOSE: 1 gram.
PRICE: 50 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: Honeydew melon.
FORM: Greenish powder. Gives a slightly melony taste and greenish tinge to what it is mixed with.
SYMPTOMS: Twitching of limbs, blurring of vision, slurring of speech as if drunk.
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: None.

Level 3 Poisons

SKINTWISTER
BEGINS AFFECT: 1D10 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 1D20 minutes.
DAMAGE: 5 points per minute.
DOSE: ¼ gram.
PRICE: 80 gold pieces.
BASE: Animal.
ODOR: None.
FORM: Blue powder. Dissolves instantly in liquid, slight blue color, no taste.
SYMPTOMS: Victim is thrown into violent convulsions and has great pain. Walking is impossible. Double the damage taken if victim is wearing very restrictive armor like full plate.
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: -5. If saving roll is made, poison still does half damage but victim will be able to keep convulsions somewhat under control and will be able to walk, though shakes will be frequent.

TODARA
BEGINS AFFECT: 1D6 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 1D4 hours.
DAMAGE: 10D8 flat.
DOSE: 1 gram.
PRICE: 60 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: Jasmine scent.
FORM: Clear liquid. Tasteless and colorless.
SYMPTOMS: Burning sensation in chest and lungs, shortness of breath.
AVAILABILITY: Average.
SAVING ROLL: -3. If saving roll is successful, poison still does half damage.

AMBER LOTUS
BEGINS AFFECT: 1D12 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 1D6 hours.
DAMAGE: 5D6 per hour.
DOSE: 2 grams.
PRICE: 100 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: Cinnamon smell.
FORM: Dried, reddish-brown leaves. Slight brown color to what it is added to and can be spotted. Tastes sweet.
SYMPTOMS: Shortness of breath, loss of sense of touch due to numbing in fingers, pain in joints.
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: None.

SNAKE MARROW
BEGINS AFFECT: 1D4 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 3D20 minutes.
DAMAGE: 10D6 flat.
DOSE: ½ gram.
PRICE: 55 gold pieces.
BASE: Animal.
ODOR: None.
FORM: Silvery-white powder, dissolves instantly in liquid. No color or taste.
SYMPTOMS: Chills, fever, shaking, blurring of vision.
AVAILABILITY: Wide.
SAVING ROLL: -2. Poison does no damage if saving roll is made but will still cause the symptoms.

TARAFIN
BEGINS AFFECT: 1D4 hours.
RUNS COURSE: 1D20 hours.
DAMAGE: 10 points per hour.
DOSE: 1 gram.
PRICE: 150 gold pieces.
BASE: Mineral.
ODOR: Waxy odor.
FORM: Black gel, dissolves slowly in liquid, darkening color of what it is mixed with. Tastes somewhat rubbery.
SYMTOMS: Very akin to those of the common cold: stuffed head, aching muscles, congestion in chest and throat.
AVAILABILITY: Average.
SAVING ROLL: None.

SANLAK
BEGINS AFFECT: 2D20 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 4D20 minutes.
DAMAGE: 5D10 flat.
DOSE: ½ gram.
PRICE: 75 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: Smells like roasted nuts.
FORM: White tablet with purple specks. Dissolves instantly in liquid. Slight nutty taste, no color.
SYMPTOMS: Loss of sense of taste and smell, pain in ears like a bad earache.
AVAILABILITY: Average.
SAVING ROLL: -4. If saving roll is successful, poison still does half damage.

Level 4 Poisons

RED LADY
BEGINS AFFECT: 6D20 seconds.
RUNS COURSE: 3D10 minutes.

DAMAGE: 15 points per minute.
DOSE: ¼ gram.
PRICE: 250 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: Slightly strawberry scent.
FORM: Reddish powder. Dissolves instantly, gives pale red tinge to what it is mixed with. Tastes somewhat salty.
SYMPTOMS: Gradual paralysis, chills, and blurring of vision in final stages.
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: None.

CHRYSOLIS
BEGINS AFFECT: 1D6 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 5D12 flat.
DOSE: 1 gram.
PRICE: 300 gold pieces.
BASE: Mineral.
ODOR: None.
FORM: Either light green liquid or speckled green powder. Tastes somewhat chalky, adds green tinge to any substance lighter than itself.
SYMPTOMS: Tightening in chest, pain in hands and feet, slight swelling of extremities.
AVAILABILITY: Average.
SAVING ROLL: -5. If saving roll is successful, poison still does half damage.

MATOSA
BEGINS AFFECT: 1D8 hours.
RUNS COURSE: 2D20 hours.
DAMAGE: 4D6 per hour.
DOSE: 2 grams.
PRICE: 200 gold pieces.
BASE: Animal.
ODOR: Sour grape odor.
FORM: Gray tablet. Dissolves slowly in liquid (1D6+6 minutes), but adds no color. Slightly sour taste.
SYMPTOMS: Gradual pain in head area, building as more damage is taken. Very violent head pain just before death.
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: None.

WOLF'S BREATH
BEGINS AFFECT: 3D8 seconds.
RUNS COURSE: 1D10 minutes.
DAMAGE: 8D8 flat.
DOSE: ½ gram.
PRICE: 150 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: None.
FORM: Brownish powder. Dissolves in liquid very fast, leaving no taste or color.
SYMPTOMS: Speeding of metabolism, heavy sweating, shakes.
AVAILABILITY: Average.
SAVING ROLL: -6. If saving roll is successful, poison still does half damage.

ANTHANE
BEGINS AFFECT: 3D10 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 1D4 hours.
DAMAGE: 2D20 per hour.
DOSE: 1 gram.
PRICE: 350 gold pieces.
BASE: Mineral.
ODOR: Spicy smell.
FORM: Light gold liquid, yellow tablet, or yellowish powder. Dissolves instantly. No taste or color.
SYMPTOMS: Hot flashes, "sparkly" vision, dryness in mouth and throat.
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: None.

SCARLET LOTUS
BEGINS AFFECT: 1D8 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 3D20 minutes.
DAMAGE: 10D6 flat.
DOSE: 1 gram.
PRICE: 200 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: Tulip smell.
FORM: Crimson leaf. Does not add color, but has odd "hot" taste like pepper sauce. Does not dissolve.
SYMPTOMS: Drowsiness which increases as poison works. Victim feels sleepy, falls unconscious after 30 points of damage and cannot be awakened until poison has run its course. Concentration will be difficult.
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: -6. If saving roll is successful, poison still does half damage.

Level 5 Poisons

CHUK

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D8 seconds.
RUNS COURSE: 1D10 minutes.
DAMAGE: 10D8 flat.
DOSE: ¼ gram.
PRICE: 300 gold pieces.
BASE: Mineral.
ODOR: None.
FORM: Light orange powder. Adds no color and dissolves rapidly. Tastes something like gin.
SYMPTOMS: Alternating hot and cold flashes, shortness of breath, vomiting.
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: -6. If saving roll is successful, poison still does half damage.

VIOLET LOTUS

BEGINS AFFECT: 2D20 seconds.
RUNS COURSE: 1D20 minutes.
DAMAGE: 4D8 per minute.
DOSE: 1 gram.
PRICE: 500 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: Sickly sweet.
FORM: Dried purplish leaves. Does not change color but has a grape-like taste. Does not dissolve.
SYMPTOMS: Violent shakes, loss of speech, burning sensation in arms and legs.
AVAILABILITY: Average.
SAVING ROLL: None.

EBONY DREAM

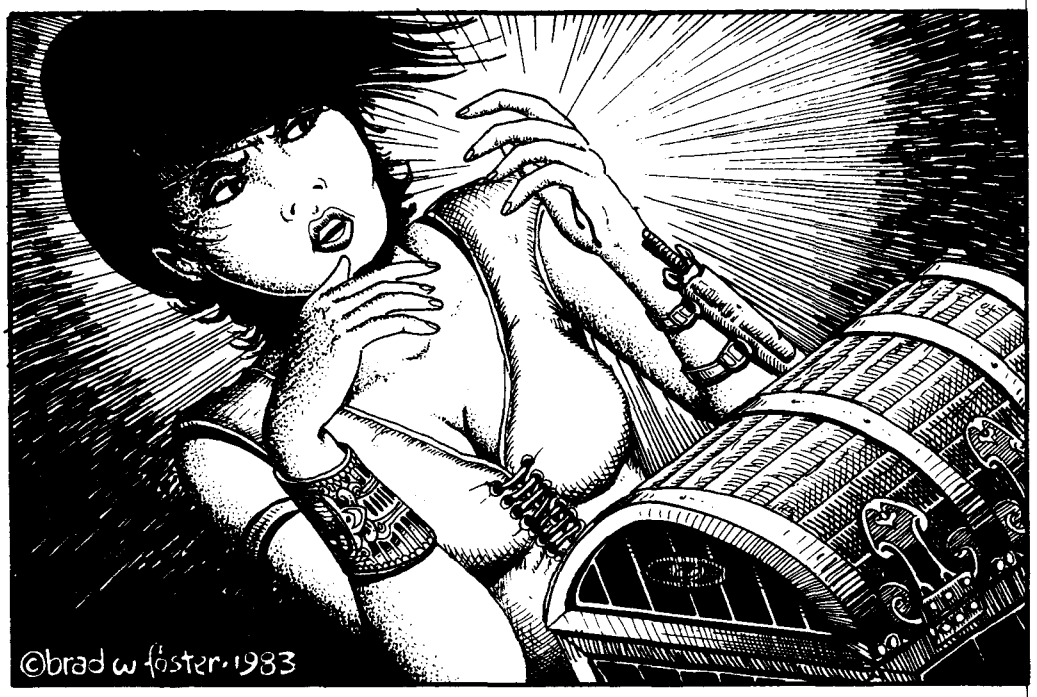
BEGINS AFFECT: 1D6 seconds.
RUNS COURSE: 2D10 minutes.
DAMAGE: 20 points per minute.
DOSE: ½ gram.
PRICE: 1000 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: None.
FORM: Black powder. Dissolves instantly, tasteless, colorless.
SYMPTOMS: Victim loses all physical senses, collapses, and is subject to vivid hallucinations generally of a pleasant nature as the poison kills.
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: None.

FIRE PAW

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D10 hours.
RUNS COURSE: 3D20 hours.
DAMAGE: 5 points per hour.
DOSE: 1 gram.
PRICE: 700 gold pieces.
BASE: Animal.
ODOR: Musky smell.
FORM: Small blue tablet. Dissolves instantly, colorless but has a slightly acidic taste.
SYMPTOMS: Searing pain throughout the body, usually disabling.
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: -5. If saving roll is made, victim still takes full damage but the running time is halved and the victim will be able to withstand the pain.

JOVARA ROOT

BEGINS AFFECT: 2D10 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 6D10 minutes.



DAMAGE: 10D10 flat.
DOSE: 2 grams.
PRICE: 850 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: None.
FORM: Goldish powder. Dissolves instantly. Tastes gingery, leaves no color.
SYMPTOMS: Nausea, shortness of breath, and disorientation.
AVAILABILITY: Average.
SAVING ROLL: Normal. If saving roll is successful, poison still does half damage.

VAROK

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D8 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 3D20 minutes.
DAMAGE: 3D6 per minute.
DOSE: ½ gram.
PRICE: 500 gold pieces.
BASE: Mineral.
ODOR: Vague iron smell.
FORM: Crystalline silvery powder. Tends to darken color of what it is mixed with. Has metallic aftertaste.
SYMPTOMS: Feverish feeling, shakes, pain in all joints.
AVAILABILITY: Average.
SAVING ROLL: None.

Level 6 Poisons

EBONY LOTUS

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D10 seconds.
RUNS COURSE: 4D20 seconds.
DAMAGE: 8D12 flat.
DOSE: 1 gram.
PRICE: 1500 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: Honey-like smell.
FORM: Dried black leaf. Darkens color of what it is mixed with. Tastes like clover honey.
SYMPTOMS: Hideous pain, gradual blindness, victim is totally and permanently blind after taking 24 points of damage.
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: -8. If saving roll is made, poison still does half damage and blindness is temporary.

DOOM WINE

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D6 seconds.
RUNS COURSE: 1D10 seconds.
DAMAGE: 100 points flat.
DOSE: ¼ gram.
PRICE: 5000 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: Smells like fine burgundy.
FORM: Wine-colored liquid with bitter taste. Darkens anything lighter than its base form.
SYMPTOMS: Extremely fast-acting, it is nearly always fatal. Pounding in head, gasping for breath, and then death.
SAVING ROLL: -5. If saving roll is made, poison still does at least 50 points of damage.

WHITE EEL

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D20 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 1D6 hours.
DAMAGE: 6D8 per hour.
DOSE: 1 gram.
PRICE: 2000 gold pieces.
BASE: Animal.
ODOR: None.
FORM: White thick liquid or gel. Dissolves slowly, but blends in with any substance becoming invisible after about six minutes. Taste is slightly creamy.
SYMPTOMS: Convulsions as if electricity were applied. These come in spurts of 1D6+6 each 10 minutes.
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: None.

CYGO

BEGINS AFFECT: 3D4 hours.
RUNS COURSE: 1D4 hours.
DAMAGE: 10D10 flat.
DOSE: 1 gram.
PRICE: 750 gold pieces.
BASE: Mineral.
ODOR: None.
FORM: Salt-like white powder. Dissolves instantly in liquid, tastes slightly dusty, colorless.
SYMPTOMS: Shortness of breath, pronounced swelling of limbs and glands (constricting armor should double damage).
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: -8. If saving roll is successful, poison still does half damage.

KUKARI

BEGINS AFFECT: 2D10 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 5D6 minutes.
DAMAGE: 3D10 per minute.
DOSE: ½ gram.
PRICE: 500 gold pieces.
BASE: Animal.
ODOR: Minty smell.
FORM: Purple liquid or powder. Powder dissolves slowly but once dissolved, leaves no color. Taste is bitter and salty.
SYMPTOMS: Causes intense weakness, reducing strength and dexterity by 1 point each for each 5 points of damage taken.
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: None.

BLUE LANCE

BEGINS AFFECT: 3D6 seconds.
RUNS COURSE: 2D20 minutes.
DAMAGE: 10D8 flat.
DOSE: 1 gram.
PRICE: 950 gold pieces.
BASE: Mineral.
ODOR: None.
FORM: Small blue tablet. Dissolves instantly, leaving no color or taste.
SYMPTOMS: Stabbing pains in all muscles, disabling pain, nausea, muscle spasms.
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: -6. If saving roll

is made, poison still does full damage but the pain will not be disabling.

KYONAI

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D10 seconds.
RUNS COURSE: 1D6+1 days.
DAMAGE: 2 points per hour.
DOSE: Special (see FORM).
PRICE: 3000 gold pieces.
ODOR: None.
FORM: Kyonai is a small maggot-like creature that secretes a deadly poison when placed in liquid. This poison causes a hideously slow and agonizing death. The usual method of using a kyonai is to dump one in a victim's glass and then remove it after it has secreted its poison. One kyonai secretes enough poison to affect three grown men in about ten seconds, after which it takes a day to regenerate its poison.
SYMPTOMS: Horrible twisting pain in all internal organs until death.
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: None.

INJECTIVE POISONS/BLADE VENOMS

A dose in the case of injective poisons refers to how much must be smeared on the blade, needle, arrow, etc. Poison on the blade will be wiped off once the blade hits a victim.

If an injective poison description contains the phrase "will discolor blade," it means the poison can be seen on the weapon. If this phrase is not used, then the poison is assumed to blend in with whatever it is applied to.

EXAMPLE: *Shyrella, a beautiful rogue with a talent for lockpicking, comes across a locked chest. She attempts to pick the lock and is suddenly stabbed in the hand by a 6" needle trap. The tip of the needle has a black discoloration. Shyrella curses but continues to pick the lock.*

The needle has only done minor damage to her hand, but the gamemaster now rolls 1D6 and gets a 3. Shyrella almost has the chest open when suddenly she gets a buzzing sensation in her ears, followed by a swift and violent convulsion. The gamemaster rolls 1D20 and gets 16, indicating the Black Fiddler poison with which the needle was coated will last for 16 minutes.

Shyrella is now writhing helplessly on the floor. The gamemaster now rolls either 1D4 and multiplies by 16 or rolls 1D4 16 times. For ease of play, the first method is used and the gamemaster rolls a 2. Shyrella will take 32 hits, 2 each minute. She can take a total of 18, but fails her saving throw, so if some cure or antidote is not found within the nine minutes she has to live, Shyrella will die.

If somehow Shyrella manages to survive, it is a good bet she will check locks carefully before attempting to pick them in the future.

Level 1 Poisons

SHANSIN

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D4 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 1D6 minutes.
DAMAGE: 4D8 flat.
DOSE: ½ oz.
PRICE: 5 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: Drygrass smell.
FORM: Inky black or greenish liquid. Will discolor blade.
SYMPTOMS: Burning sensation in lungs, speeding of heart, heavy sweating.
AVAILABILITY: Wide.
SAVING ROLL: Normal. If saving roll is successful, poison still does half damage.

BORAKI LEAF

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D20 seconds.
RUNS COURSE: 1D10 minutes.
DAMAGE: 5D6 flat.
DOSE: 1 leaf.
PRICE: 25 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: Oak-like scent.
FORM: A wide yellowish leaf with thick veins. The leaf is cut and its fluid spread on the blade. The fluid is clear, but sticky.
SYMPTOMS: Intense pain in abdomen and genitals, 50% chance of disabling pain, dexterity halved.
AVAILABILITY: Average.
SAVING ROLL: +1. If saving roll is made, poison still does half damage and halves dexterity, but no disabling pain.

BLACK FIDDLER

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D6 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 1D20 minutes.
DAMAGE: 1D4 per minute.
DOSE: 1 oz.
PRICE: 15 gold pieces.
BASE: Animal.
ODOR: None.
FORM: Black oil. Will discolor blade.
SYMPTOMS: Violent convulsions, pain in ears accompanied by a buzzing sensation. Victim is disabled.
AVAILABILITY: Average.
SAVING ROLL: Normal. If saving roll is made, poison still does half damage and symptoms remain the same.

Level 2 Poisons

NIOJO

BEGINS AFFECT: 2D20 seconds.
RUNS COURSE: 2D6 minutes.
DAMAGE: 5D8 flat.
DOSE: 1 oz.
PRICE: 35 gold pieces.
BASE: Mineral.
ODOR: Stale orange smell.
FORM: Grayish gel. Will not discolor blade.
SYMPTOMS: Shortness of breath, cold chills.
AVAILABILITY: Average.
SAVING ROLL: None.

GHOUL'S BLOOD

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D4 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 3D6 minutes.
DAMAGE: 1D10 per minute.
DOSE: ½ oz.
PRICE: 85 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: None.
FORM: Dull reddish liquid. Will discolor blade.
SYMPTOMS: Paralysis after 10 points of damage which lasts for thrice the length of time the poison runs its course.
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: -1. If saving roll is made, poison still does half damage but no paralysis, just a general stiffness.

GELAMIN

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D6 minutes.
RUNS CQURSE: 3D10 minutes.
DAMAGE: 6D8 flat.
DOSE: ½ gram.
PRICE: 100 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: Rotten smell.
FORM: White paste. Usually used as an arrow poison. No discoloration.
SYMPTOMS: Intense pain in entire body, 65% chance of disabling pain. Tongue swells, making speech difficult.
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: -3. If saving roll is made, poison still does half damage, and symptoms remain the same.

Level 3 Poisons

ASP BONE

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D8 seconds.
RUNS COURSE: 4D4 minutes.
DAMAGE: 1D20 per minute.
DOSE: 1 oz.
PRICE: 85 gold pieces.
BASE: Animal.
ODOR: None.
FORM: Milky blue fluid. Will not discolor blade.
SYMPTOMS: Dizziness, shortness of breath, swelling of fingers and toes.
AVAILABILITY: Average.
SAVING ROLL: -4. If saving roll is made, poison still does half damage and symptoms remain the same.

ULEVA

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D20 seconds.
RUNS COURSE: 1D6 hours.
DAMAGE: 2D20 per hour.
DOSE: ½ oz.
PRICE: 175 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: None.
FORM: Dark brown thick, sticky sap. Will discolor blade.
SYMPTOMS: Burning sensation, nausea, hazing of vision.
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: None.

WHITE POPPY

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D6 seconds.
RUNS COURSE: 3D20 minutes.
DAMAGE: 8D6 flat.
DOSE: 1 oz.
PRICE: 200 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: Honey-like.
FORM: Off-white powder which is mixed with water. Will not discolor blade.
SYMPTOMS: Disorientation, loss of equilibrium, dexterity halved.
AVAILABILITY: Average.
SAVING ROLL: -3. If saving roll is made, poison still does half damage, disorientation and halving of dexterity remain the same but no loss of equilibrium.

Level 4 Poisons

DEATH ALMOND

BEGINS AFFECT: 2D6 seconds.
RUNS COURSE: 2D8 minutes.
DAMAGE: 3D6 per minute.
DOSE: ½ gram.
PRICE: 200 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: Almondy scent.
FORM: A brown gel specked with white. Will discolor blade.
SYMPTOMS: Nausea, vomiting, pain in all joints.
AVAILABILITY: Average.
SAVING THROW: None.

SEA WASP

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D4 seconds.
RUNS COURSE: 3D10 minutes.
DAMAGE: 60 points flat.
DOSE: 1 oz.
PRICE: 350 gold pieces.
BASE: Animal.
ODOR: Salt-watery smell.
FORM: Clear oily liquid. Will not discolor blade.
SYMPTOMS: Tingling throughout body, violent itching sensation, shortness of breath.

AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: None.

JAVATRIN

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D8 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 1D6 hours.
DAMAGE: 2D6 per hour.
DOSE: 1 oz.
PRICE: 300 gold pieces.
BASE: Mineral.
ODOR: None.
FORM: Pastel-pink gel. Will not discolor blade.
SYMPTOMS: Eyes water, hands tremble, speech centers of brain paralyzed.
AVAILABILITY: Wide.
SAVING ROLL: -4. If saving roll is successful, poison still does half damage and symptoms remain the same.

Level 5 Poisons

GREY WHISPER

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D4 seconds.
RUNS COURSE: 1 hour.
DAMAGE: 8D8 flat.
DOSE: ½ oz.
PRICE: 400 gold pieces.
BASE: Mineral.
ODOR: Waxy smell.
FORM: Chunk of gummy, grey putty that is rubbed on a blade. Will discolor.
SYMPTOMS: Causes voice to crack, victim able to talk only in a whisper. Heavy sweating.
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: None.

ATAMIL

BEGINS AFFECT: 2D10 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 5D20 minutes.
DAMAGE: 15 points per minute.
DOSE: 1 oz.
PRICE: 500 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: None.
FORM: Pinkish liquid. Will discolor blade.
SYMPTOMS: Great head pain, loss of hearing (temporary, if victim survives).
AVAILABILITY: Average.
SAVING ROLL: -6. If saving roll is made, poison still does half damage but there is no loss of hearing.

DRAGON GREASE

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D10 seconds.
RUNS COURSE: 2D20 minutes.
DAMAGE: 10D10 flat.
DOSE: ½ oz.
PRICE: 700 gold pieces.
BASE: Animal.
ODOR: Straw-like smell.
FORM: Pale yellow gel. Will not discolor blade.
SYMPTOMS: Burning sensation throughout body, heavy sweating, numbing of lips and tongue.
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: None.

Level 6 Poisons

VENDARYN

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D4 seconds.
RUNS COURSE: 4D6 minutes.
DAMAGE: 2D8 per minute.
DOSE: ½ gram.
PRICE: 800 gold pieces.
BASE: Animal.
ODOR: None.
FORM: Greenish fluid. Usually used on arrows, will discolor blades.
SYMPTOMS: Nausea, vomiting, loss of strength (reduced to half).
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: -6. If saving roll is successful, poison still does half damage but will not cause loss of strength.

LURODA

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D10 minutes.
DAMAGE: 10D10 flat.
DOSE: 1 oz.
PRICE: 500 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: Grape-like scent.
FORM: Purple liquid. Will discolor blade.
SYMPTOMS: Paralysis beginning after 20 points of damage have been taken (lasts throughout the time it runs its course plus 1D20 minutes after).
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: -8. If saving roll is successful, poison still does half damage but there is no paralysis.

AZMADON

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D20 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 1D4 hours.
DAMAGE: 4D10 per hour.
DOSE: ½ oz.
PRICE: 1000 gold pieces.
BASE: Mineral.
ODOR: Milky smell.
FORM: Chalky white fluid. Will not discolor blade.
SYMPTOMS: Shortness of breath, violent shaking, hallucinations.
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: None.

CONTACT POISONS

Contact poisons could be used as blade venoms, but care must be taken when applying since contact with bare flesh is all that is needed for the poison to take effect. One dose of the contact poison applied to the surface is all that is required. Gauntlets and such will keep the poison away from the skin surface.

EXAMPLE: *Gorban the Sorcerer has breached the stronghold of a rival wizard and is now facing the wizard. The rival wizard tells Gorban that he wishes no duels of magick and would prefer to negotiate over a glass of wine. Gorban agrees and the rival wizard gets a tray with two brass goblets on it. He sets the tray down on a table and fills both goblets with wine. Gorban suspects treachery but his fears are allayed when his rival fills both goblets from the same decanter and swiftly drinks.*

Gorban now lifts his own goblet. The goblet seems dusty but Gorban pays this no mind. The gamemaster rolls 1D8 and comes up with a 3. Three seconds later, Gorban feels strange. He cannot seem to focus his eyes properly and his rival continues to drink and smiles. The gamemaster now rolls 3D20 and comes up with 35. He then rolls 2D10 and gets 8. Gorban immediately takes 8 points of damage and will continue to take 2D10 points of damage every minute until he expires or finds a cure.

Fortunately Gorban manages to make his saving roll and takes no brain damage, nor goes mad. He also reduces the first 8 points of damage to 4. In the next three minutes, Gorban takes an additional 16 points of damage, enough to slay him. Before dying, however, he manages to blast his rival with a spell, thus avenging himself. The Brass Lady contact poison claims another victim.

Level 1 Poisons

BROWN CAT

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D8 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 3D20 minutes.
DAMAGE: 4D8 flat.
DOSE: 1 gram.
PRICE: 50 gold pieces.
BASE: Animal.
ODOR: None.

FORM: A sticky brownish gel. Can be seen if examined closely.
SYMPTOMS: Nose runs, heavy salivating, eyes get bloodshot.
AVAILABILITY: Wide.
SAVING ROLL: +1. If saving roll is successful, poison still does half damage.

TINTOPHA

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D20 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 1D10 minutes.
DAMAGE: 1D6 per minute.
DOSE: 1 gram.
PRICE: 65 gold pieces.
BASE: Mineral.
ODOR: None.
FORM: A red liquid, much like paint. Leaves a faint red discoloration on what it is applied to.
SYMPTOMS: Dryness in throat and mouth, shortness of breath, dizziness.
AVAILABILITY: Average.
SAVING ROLL: Normal. If saving roll is successful, poison still does half damage.

Level 2 Poisons

PANJI

BEGINS AFFECT: 2D20 seconds.
RUNS COURSE: 1 hour.
DAMAGE: 5D8 flat.
DOSE: ½ oz.
PRICE: 85 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: Slightly like cherry blossoms.
FORM: A silvery dust. Blends in with anything of a silvery color, otherwise as a silvery discoloration.
SYMPTOMS: Nausea, vomiting, and gum bleeding.
SAVING ROLL: -2. If saving roll is successful, poison still does half damage.

DEVIL PLANT

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D10 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 1D4 hours.
DAMAGE: 2D20 per hour.
DOSE: 1 oz.
PRICE: 150 gold pieces.
BASE: Mineral.
ODOR: None.
FORM: Bluish liquid. Leaves blue discoloration.
SYMPTOMS: Trembling, fever, skin takes on a sickly bluish pallor.
AVAILABILITY: Average.
SAVING ROLL: -3. If saving roll is successful, poison still does half damage.

Level 3 Poisons

GOLDSAP

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D20 seconds.
RUNS COURSE: 1D10 minutes.
DAMAGE: 3D6 per minute.
DOSE: ½ oz.
PRICE: 200 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: None.
FORM: Light golden powder. Blends perfectly with gold objects, leaves light gold discoloration otherwise.
SYMPTOMS: Shortness of breath, throbbing pain in leg and arm joints, slurring of speech.
AVAILABILITY: Average.
SAVING ROLL: -5. If saving roll is successful, poison still does half damage.

WITCHES ALE

BEGINS AFFECT: 2D10 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 3D20 minutes.
DAMAGE: 6D12 flat.
DOSE: 1 oz.
PRICE: 400 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: Slight rose-like odor.
FORM: Amber liquid. Blends in with whatever it is applied to.
SYMPTOMS: Loss of sense of tough, swollen glands in throat, coughing.
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: None.

Level 4 Poisons

ZHANDOR

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D20 seconds.
RUNS COURSE: 1D4 hours.
DAMAGE: 7D8 flat.
DOSE: 1 gram.
PRICE: 500 gold pieces.
BASE: Mineral.
ODOR: None.
FORM: Purple gel. Leaves slight purple discoloration.
SYMPTOMS: Nose bleed, sharp stabbing chest pains.
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: -5. If saving roll is successful, poison still does half damage.

FUMOTO

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D4 hours.
RUNS COURSE: 1D8 hours.
DAMAGE: 5D6 per hour.
DOSE: ½ oz.
PRICE: 750 gold pieces.
BASE: Animal.
ODOR: Slight rotten apple smell.
FORM: Smoky brown liquid. Blends in with what it is applied on to.
SYMPTOMS: Dexterity and strength halved, heavy sweating.
AVAILABILITY: Average.
SAVING ROLL: None.

Level 5 Poisons

BLIND MOUSE

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D6 seconds.
RUNS COURSE: 1D20 minutes.
DAMAGE: 1D4 per minute.
DOSE: ½ oz.
PRICE: 800 gold pieces.
BASE: Animal.
ODOR: Greasy scent.
FORM: Blue-gray jel. Can be seen if examined closely.
SYMPTOMS: Permanent blindness beginning after 8 points of damage have been taken, dryness of palms.
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: -5. If saving roll is made, poison still does full damage but blindness is not permenent.

CORELLA

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D10 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 1D6 hours.
DAMAGE: 10D10 flat.
DOSE: ½ oz.
PRICE: 1000 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: None.
FORM: Dark green oil. Can be seen if examined closely.
SYMPTOMS: Sensation of icy cold all over body, festering of any open wounds, blackening of tongue.
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: None.

Level 6 Poisons

BRASS LADY

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D8 seconds.
RUNS COURSE: 3D20 minutes.
DAMAGE: 2D10 per minute.
DOSE: ½ oz.
PRICE: 950 gold pieces.
BASE: Plant.
ODOR: Slight coconutty scent.
FORM: Brass-colored dust. Blends invisibly with brass, can be seen if examined closely on other substances.
SYMPTOMS: Disorientation, brain damage (I.Q. halved), madness after 30 points of damage have been taken.
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: -7. If saving roll is successful, poison still does half damage but no brain damage nor madness.

PINK SAPPHIRE

BEGINS AFFECT: 1D10 minutes.
RUNS COURSE: 1D4 hours.
DAMAGE: 10D12 flat.
DOSE: ½ oz.
PRICE: 2000 gold pieces.
BASE: Animal.
ODOR: None.
FORM: A pinkish powder. Can be seen if examined closely.
SYMPTOMS: Intense, disabling pain, spitting of blood, trembling.
AVAILABILITY: Rare.
SAVING ROLL: None. □

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Books & Gaming

Reviews of books with interesting world settings useful for creating imaginative role-playing campaigns.

The Gandalara Cycle:

THE STEEL OF RAITHSKAR

THE GLASS OF DYSKORNIS

THE BRONZE OF EDDARTA

By Randall Garrett and Vicki Ann Heydron (Bantam, $2.25, $2.50, and $2.95)

Reviewed by John T. Sapienza, Jr.

The publisher is accurate in describing this as a rousing adventure series, although whether you want to call it science fiction or fantasy is a matter of taste. The premise is that the hero dies on Earth and awakens in the body of a newly-killed warrior on the desert world Gandalara, with some lingering skills, abilities, and memories, but not a complete set. He also inherits complications such as debts, enemies, and a fiancee. It is great fun in the tradition of Burrough's Barsoom novels and Prescott's Scorpio series, and using some of the same pulp-fiction techniques.

In the first volume, the hero has to cope with finding himself alone in the desert except for a giant feline warmount telepathically linked to him—who knows perfectly well that he is not who he seems to be. After passing that test, he has to face others: the people of his city, his family, and his fiancee. And the fact that a lot of people blame him for the theft of an ancient symbol of royalty, a precious sacred jewel. The quest for the jewel is the theme of the trilogy. In the second volume, the hero must find acceptance among the warrior brotherhood of cat riders, with currents and cross-currents of politics capped by an assassination attempt by magical illusions that introduces him to a lady who is not what she seems. And eventually to her father, whose jewel is not what it seems, either. The third volume takes the hero, his reluctant lieutenant, and the illusionist after the master magician who schemes to use the jewel in his quest for power.

This trilogy is the first part of a planned series of nine books. Randall Garrett and his wife Vicki Ann Heydron developed an outline for the series, complete with maps and character sketches for the world and peoples of Gandalara (a play on the author's names). While they were working on the first book, Randall Garrett contracted encephalitis, and the series is being carried on by Heydron although under the joint byline. The fourth volume, *Well Of Darkness*, is schedule for December 1983.

The feature most likely to be adopted for gaming from the series is the giant cats. Felines large enough to ride are nothing original—E.R. Burroughs used them several times in his Tarzan books. Intelligent critters with a telepathic link to humans are not original, either, the most obvious comparison being McCaffrey's dragons of Pern. But the combination works well, and should have an appeal to anyone with the mythological background to know that the ancient opposite power to Dragon was Panther. Cat lovers of the world, unite!

Another interesting feature to the series that could be adapted to gaming is the concept of the All-Mind. The authors deliberately are holding out on what this is, although the series is dictated to a Recorder, a skilled occupation which allows the living to add their knowledge to the spiritual or mental field that exists throughout Gandalara. The All-Mind is apparently the force that allows for telepathy to operate between individuals, for example. It may well be the force that powers all mysterious magic on the planet, such as the sacred gem. The All-Mind also gives all Gandalarians an "inner awareness" of their health, of the time of day, when the sun or moon would rise or set, things like that. It appears that data from every living person may be filtering subconsciously into and out of the All-Mind for this awareness to operate. You could easily use this as the starting point for a field theory of magic to explain psionics, mind reading and control, contact with the living and the dead, and a lot of other things for mages and priests to get involved with, each with his own emphasis and claims of legitimacy.

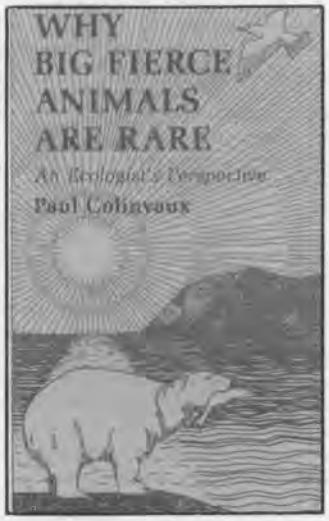
WHY BIG FIERCE ANIMALS ARE RARE: An Ecologist's Perspective

By Paul Colinvaux (Princeton University Press, $?).

Reviewed by David Dunham

Many of the scenario reviews in *Different Worlds* complain about the unrealistic and unbelievable ecology of "dungeon" settings. It is easy to see that a dungeon with one creature per room is not oriented to the survival of its (usually carnivorous) inhabitants. It is less obvious what makes a functional ecology. *Why Big Fierce Animals Are Rare*, though it does not specifically tell you how to set up an ecosystem, is an excellent introduction to how ecology works.

The book is organized around answering questions. Why do common animals stay common and rare animals stay rare? Why is the sea blue? How efficient are plants? Why are there no trees in the arctic? What happens to abandoned farmland? Why are there so many species? How do humans affect the ecology? How does ecology shape our history? Why are big fierce animals rare?



In answering the title question, Colinvaux claims that the vicious Tyrannosaurus Rex is a myth: it was actually a sluggish carrion-feeder, that being the most efficient way to obtain food calories. This myth taken care of, Colinvaux concludes that real-life predators are limited to the size of a tiger, because the food energy available to them is limited. In a later chapter he speculates on how an increase in the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere might allow tiger-eating dragons. In any case, predators really are not as bad as their public image, almost always preying on the very young, the sick, or the very old. A moose in the prime of life has nothing to worry about from a pack of wolves.

Many of the other questions have non-obvious answers, too. For example, plants are only 2% efficient in converting sunlight into usable energy, and the "Green Revolution" has not increased this efficiency (available carbon dioxide is the most important limiting factor). The ocean is even less efficient, and we are already taking about as much out of it as we can. Infanticide was practiced by historical societies in order to increase the growth rate of their populations. While the answers may not be intuitive, the reasoning that leads to them is clear and staightforward. Colinvaux uses a very readable style, and writes so that someone with no formal training in biology (me) can understand him. You do need to be aware of the law of natural selection, which Colinvaux takes to its logical conclusions. But he never bogs down in needless detail.

Although this book is a book on ecology, it is not an environmentalist book. Colinvaux is careful to debunk ecological fallacies, such as the possbility of destroying the earth's oxygen, the killing of Lake Erie, and the unstability of less complex ecosystems (the arctic tundra is not a fragile ecosystem, and is not damaged by the Alaska pipeline).

I strongly recommend *Why Big Fierce Animals Are Rare*. It is fun as well as informative, and useful for any scenario or campaign designer, from the science-fiction role-player designing a planet, to the fantasy gamer worrying about dragons. □

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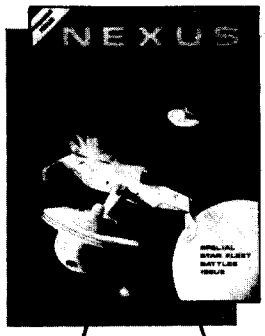

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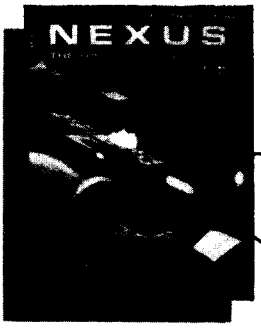

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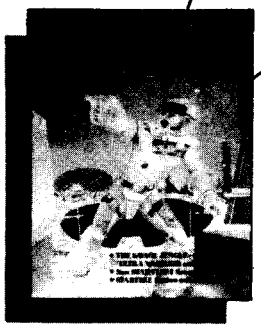

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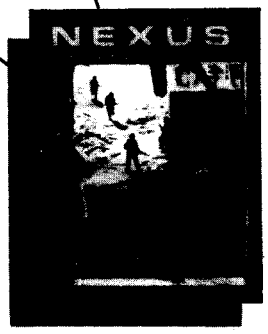

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If you wish to see your convention listed in Different Worlds, *provide us with the name of the event, dates, location, who to contact, number of attendees expected, and number of attendees you had last year. There is no charge for this service, but please, game cons only.*

MicroWars '83 **December 3-4, 1983**
CSU Dominguez Hills CA
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1000 E Victoria
Carson CA 90747

Crusader Con III **January 13-15, 1984**
Metropolitan State College, Denver CO
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Metropolitan State College
1006 Eleventh St, Box 39
Denver CO 80204

DunDraCon VIII **February 17-20, 1984**
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DunDraCon Inc
386 Alcatraz Ave
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Game Faire **February 25-26, 1984**
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GOLD-CON II **March 3-4, 1984**
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CoastCon 84 **March 9-11, 1984**
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CoastCon
PO Box 1423
Biloxi MS 39533

CAPCON '84 **April 6-8, 1984**
South Terrace, Ohio Union, OSU,
Columbus OH
Paul T. Riegel
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6119 E Main St (Nr. 202)
Columbus OH 43213
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Reading University, England
GamesFair/TSR UK Ltd
The Mill, Rathmore Rd
Cambridge CB1 4AD
England

ONOCON '84 **May 4-6, 1984**
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Syracuse NY 13208

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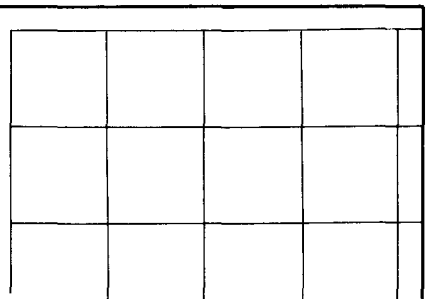

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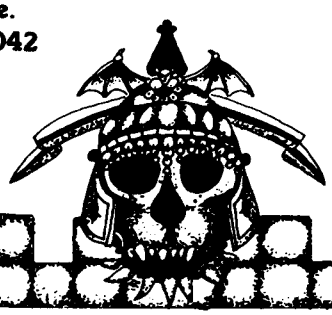

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Dave Arneson (left) and John Grossman of Adventure Games waiting for customers.

"Where is Tim Kask?"

Origins 83 Scrapbook

By Tadashi Ehara

Photographs by John T. Sapienza, Jr.

Time: July 14-17, 1983
Place: Cobo Hall, Detroit MI
Hosted by: Metro Detroit Gamers

Two from Califonia with their game lawyer (left to right): John T. Sapienza, Jr., Greg Stafford, and Tadashi Ehara.

People involved in the Avalon Hill/Chaosium/*RuneQuest* deal (left to right): Steve Perrin, Greg Stafford, Eric Dott, Tadashi Ehara, and Tom Shaw.

People who like to do things in a big way: Darwin Bromley (seated) and Bill Fawcett of Mayfair Games.

Richard Meyer (left) and Kerry Lloyd of Gamelords smug with success.

Steve Peterson, Bruce Harlick, and Ray Greer of Hero Games.

Balo, the insane jester of the Lords of Chaos, knowing of Arioch's plan to utterly defeat the detested Lords of Law on Young Kingdoms Earth, projected his spirit into the future. What he learned there horrified even that mad deity of Chaos, but when he returned and tried to tell Arioch, his master, how Elric would bring disaster to all his plans, the Prince of Swords only laughed at him, thinking this wild story to be Balo's best joke yet.

"Elric is the sweetest of my pets and playthings," Arioch declared, "and he shall be the pawn that checkmates the Lords of Law."

Seeing that he could not move his master with warnings, Balo begged leave to construct a miniature world for the amusement of the Lords of Chaos. Mortals from the Young Kingdoms would be brought into this mad world of Balo's creations where their struggles to survive could amuse the watching Lords of Chaos. In reality, the whole world was but a trap for the destruction of Elric, for Balo knew that he could gain Arioch's permission to bring Elric into it at least once.

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STORMBRINGER Scenario

Bastions Of Balo

By Ken St. Andre *Illustrated by Brad W. Foster*

This adventure is for any reasonable number of *Stormbringer* characters at any level of development. If the gamemaster and players wish, they may include Elric and Stormbringer as part of the group. This means that some player will have to role-play Elric (use stats in the *Stormbringer* rules, p. 125). Do not worry about equipping the player-characters at the beginning of the scenario—they will be stripped of all equipment, and be rearmed at the beginning of the game according to their own wit and ability.

It is necessary for the gamemaster to play Balo for this adventure. Nonetheless, neither Balo nor the other Lords of Chaos, nor even the Lords of Law may participate directly in the adventure either to harm or help. The Bastions of Balo are entirely self-contained, but it is just barely possible that a master sorcerer could breach their barriers with the aid of one of the Elemental Rulers.

All player-characters going into the Bastions of Balo start by being put into a trance while sleeping. While their bodies lie dormant in the world of the Young Kingdoms, their astral forms (which have exactly the same characteristics and powers as their material bodies) are taken to the Bastions. For purposes of the adventure, the astral forms of the player-characters are as solid and real as the sleeping forms they left behind. All adventurers arrive completely naked and devoid of special equipment, with the exception of Elric, who arrives carrying Stormbringer.

When ready to begin play, put all characters in the room marked "start" and see if they can solve the first puzzle.

START. This is a large room, 60' square. There is no furniture and the floor is bare black stone. On the ceiling is a giant sign of Chaos with its eight arrows radiating from a circle, each arrow radiating a different color: green, blue, yellow, orange, brown, indigo, white, and red. The eastern wall is entirely green. The southern wall is blood red. The northern wall is carved to represent the entire pantheon of Chaos, while the western wall shows a huge relief of a sly, smiling, hump-backed god in motley clothing.

Three of the walls are completely solid, but the green wall is an illusion—characters may walk through it at will. Once beyond it, however, they will find themselves in a 10'x10'x10' stone passageway carved entirely of red stone and glowing dimly with reddish light. From this point they cannot re-enter the starting room.

The gamemaster may have to help the characters solve this puzzle. If any of them try praying to or invoking any of the Lords of Chaos, the gamemaster can have that deity make a brief appearance and tell his worshipper to "Ask Balo." The Elric player will almost certainly try to invoke Arioch to get out of this jam. Arioch should explain that he cannot aid his favorite in any way, but neither can the gods take any direct action to harm him or his companions.

When Balo is invoked, he will appear with two demons. (The gamemaster may give any desired description of these demons—they are not here to fight.) One is a Demon of Desire, and the other is a Demon of Knowledge. The Demon of Desire will produce three corporeal items for each delver who asks it. The Demon of Knowledge will answer one question for each character and one only. If the demons are attacked, they will disappear, leaving the players with whatever they may have managed to acquire. It is up to the gamemaster to fulfill the letter of the player requests while avoiding the spirit of them. Remember that you are playing Balo, god of malicious mischief. (Example: in one playtest, a player asked for a winged dragon to ride as a steed. I gave him one slightly smaller than a Shetland pony and barely strong enough to carry the character. The character had to make DEX rolls to stay aboard when the dragon was in the air.)

After all players have equipped themselves as well as their wit allows, the gamemaster should see to it that they figure out that they can exit through the green wall. The rest of the scenario map is coded in numbers. When the gamemaster feels the characters are close enough to observe the particular numbered item, he should describe it for them and get their actions. Gamemasters have the right and duty to embellish these necessary bare-bones descriptions with any added detail or complications that they feel will add either amusement or adventure.

Bastions Of Balo
GODS
RED
START
BLUE
GREEN
G
W
C
B
A
N
SCALE CHANGES BY 1000
0 10 20
FEET
WEST
SOUTH
NORTH
EAST

KEY

1. This is a *bas-relief* face of a tiger in the stone wall. A successful Search roll will find the movable fang that causes the tiger's mouth to gape wide open. Down the tiger's throat is a small dark twisting passage, barely large enough to crawl in.

2. This is the narrowest part of the passage. Only characters with SIZ 8 or less can pass.

3. At the end of the passage is a skeleton of a man in rotted armor. The leg bones are broken and the skull is smashed. Near the body is an old silver-bronze saber (1D6+2 damage) and dagger (1D4+2). There is also a medallion of Power. When worn, it adds 1 to the wearer's POW rating. The only way out is to return by the way you came.

4. At this point, the characters will meet eight warriors of Pan Tang. They will try to recruit other Pan Tangians to join them, but will attack and try to kill any other nationalities at their first opportunity. The gamemaster should role-play these characters as treacherous and cunning. They may pretend friendship for a strong batch of delvers, only to turn on them and stab them in the back at their first opportunity.

LIVID DREDD — **Warrior Assassin**

STR 11 CON 14 SIZ 9 INT 14 POW 13 DEX 10 CHA 7

ARMOR: 1D8-1 half-plate.
HIT POINTS: 14 (major wound level 7).

WEAPONS	*Attack*	*Damage*	*Parry*
Greatsword	53%	2D8	51%
Dagger	43%	1D4+2	41%

SKILLS: Ride 26%; Listen 63%; Search 28%; Ambush 52%; Hide 52%; Move Quietly 62%; Poison Lore 30%.

MONEY: 102 LB.

FADAN VAS . . . . . **Warrior**

STR 13 CON 12 SIZ 10 INT 9 POW 17 DEX 9 CHA 17

ARMOR: 1D8-1 half-plate.
HIT POINTS: 12 (major wound level 6).

WEAPONS	*Attack*	*Damage*	*Parry*
Battle axe	56%	1D8+2	56%
Target shield	46%	1D6	46%
Dagger	36%	1D4+2	46%

SKILLS: Ride 71%; Persuade 20%.

MONEY: 69 LB.

SALAR VEN — **Warrior Assassin**

STR 9 CON 9 SIZ 11 INT 20 POW 15 DEX 7 CHA 16

ARMOR: 1D8-1 half-plate.
HIT POINTS: 9 (major wound level 5).

WEAPONS	*Attack*	*Damage*	*Parry*
Broadsword	59%	1D8+1	51%
Target	49%	1D6	41%
Dagger	39%	1D4+2	41%

SKILLS: Ride 66%; Listen 71%; Search 36%; Ambush 56%; Hide 56%; Move Quietly 66%; Poison Lore 30%.

MONEY: 24 LB.

OKON NORR — **Noble Warrior**

STR 10 CON 16 SIZ 15 INT 19 POW 16 DEX 10 CHA 12

ARMOR: 1D10-1 plate.
HIT POINTS: 19 (major wound level 10).

WEAPONS	*Attack*	*Damage*	*Parry*
Battle axe	61%	1D8+1D6+2	51%
Shield	51%	2D6	41%
Dagger	41%	1D6+1D4+2	31%

SKILLS: Ride 26%; Balance 21%; Listen 21%; See 21%; Credit 51%; Persuade 21%.

MONEY: 183 LB.

KAR-TUR LYN — **Warrior Assassin**

STR 13 CON 10 SIZ 12 INT 19 POW 15 DEX 13 CHA 12

ARMOR: 1D8-1 half-plate.
HIT POINTS: 10 (major wound level 5).

WEAPONS	*Attack*	*Damage*	*Parry*
Lormyr axe	62%	4D6	55%
Scimitar	52%	1D8+1D6+1	45%
Hatchet	42%	2D6+1	35%

SKILLS: Ride 70%; Listen 70%; Search 35%; Ambush 58%; Hide 58%; Move Quietly 68%; Poison Lore 30%.

SUMMONINGS: Fire Elemental 50%.

MONEY: 138 LB.

ARRIGH OKK — **Noble Warrior**

STR 10 CON 12 SIZ 18 INT 13 POW 19 DEX 11 CHA 10

ARMOR: 1D10-1 plate.
HIT POINTS: 18 (major wound level 9).

WEAPONS	*Attack*	*Damage*	*Parry*
Scimitar	58%	1D8+1D6+1	51%
Shield	48%	2D6	41%
Dagger	38%	1D6+1D4+2	31%

SKILLS: Ride 66%; Credit 48%.

SUMMONINGS: Fire Elemental 50%.

MONEY 70 LB.

SCUZ'R DIMB — **Warrior Assassin**

STR 6 CON 10 SIZ 14 INT 19 POW 22 DEX 3 CHA 11

ARMOR: 1D8-1 half-plate.
HIT POINTS: 12 (major wound level 6).

WEAPONS	*Attack*	*Damage*	*Parry*
Dagger	58%	1D4+2	49%

SKILLS: Ride 64%; Balance 27%; Listen 77%; Search 42%; See 27%; Persuade 27%; Ambush 49%; Hide 49%; Move Quietly 59%; Poison Lore 30%.

ELEMENTAL SUMMONINGS: Air 74%; Fire 98%; Water 55%.
DEMON SUMMONINGS: Combat 92%; Desire 56%; Protection 77%.
OTHER SUMMONINGS: Kakatal.

MONEY: 151 LB.

MURGAN DORN — **Warrior**

STR 12 CON 6 SIZ 14 INT 19 POW 20 DEX 9 CHA 12

ARMOR: 1D8-1 half-plate.
HIT POINTS: 8 (major wound level 4)

WEAPONS	*Attack*	*Damage*	*Parry*
Long spear	65%	1D10+1D6+1	56%
Dagger	55%	1D6+1D4+2	46%

SKILLS: Ride 71%; Balance 25%; Listen 25%; See 25%; Persuade 25%.

MONEY: 181 LB.

5. This is a huge golden statue of Balo. The eyes are crossed and the tongue sticks out. Fabulous jewels are set into the metal to represent Balo's clothing. The statue appears to be sitting on a book. Anyone who can read High Melnibonean can pick out the title, *1001 Insults for Pompous Deities*. Touching or defacing the statue summons the demon in entry 6.

6. This is an ugly but comical Demon of Protection. It gives only one warning. If the statue of Balo in entry 5 is touched or defaced, the demon will attack, concentrating its attack on the character with the highest POW rating. If any part of the idol is carried off, the demon will pursue the thief.

COPPER — **Demon of Protection**

STR 17 CON 22 SIZ 12 INT 9 POW 8 DEX 19 CHA 3

ARMOR: 20-point skin.
HIT POINTS: 22 (major wound level 11).
SPECIAL POWERS: Invulnerability.

WEAPONS	*Attack*	*Damage*	*Parry*
Broom	31%	2D10+1	19%
Rolling pin	47%	2D8+2	08%

7. This is a glass doorway, shatterproof, and without any handle or hinges. Through the glass can be seen thousands of bronze and silver pieces. Painted on the glass of the door is a little jingle:

Find the wine that drives men mad
Drink a swig and you'll be glad
All this loot, more than you think

Is for the men who dare to drink.

W. Concealed at point W within a hidden panel in the wall of the tunnel is large flask of pale yellow wine. It takes a successful Search roll to find it. Anyone who drinks the wine must make his INT x2% roll or lose 1D4 INT points permanently. All those who drink find themselves drawn into room 8. While inside room 8, the wine will also cause sleepiness. To avoid going to sleep, the character must make its POW x1% roll. It must do this for every ten game minutes it spends in the room.

8. This room is half full of silver and bronze coins from Pan Tang and Dharijor. There is limitless wealth in here. To enter the room, characters must drink the wine, and the wine puts them to sleep for six game turns unless they make their POW rolls. When everyone in the room is asleep, small monkey-like demons will enter from point 11 and take their weapons, substituting worthless rubber ones. If anyone takes any of the money, it turns out to be chocolate candy wrapped in bronze and silver tinfoil to simulate coins.

9 and 10. There are no points 9 and 10. The gamemaster may place them wherever he wants and put whatever he wants at those points.

11. This is the only exit from room 8. The wall is beveled at this point, and the stone shows a huge likeness of Balo's face complete with cap and bells. A successful Search roll will ring the bell (which is real) and the jaws will open, displaying a passage leading out between several jagged, razor-sharp teeth. As each character passes through the jaws of Balo, it must make its POW x5% roll or the jaws snap shut and cut the character in half, something that is instantly fatal. After the jaws snap shut, the mouth must be re-opened from room 8.

12. This little room contains 10,000 large bronze coins from Argimiliar. The treasure is guarded by an indestructible demon that lives in the walls. Ordinary weapons glance harmlessly off its stony body with a 50% chance of breaking, although a war hammer might shatter the demon if it got a critical hit or applied more than 34 hits worth of damage at any time.

FRAGMAN **Demon of Protection**

STR 20 CON 14 SIZ 22 INT 7 POW 8 DEX 20 CHA 7

ARMOR: 20-point stone (non-magical weapons have a 50% chance of breaking, except hammers and maces).
HIT POINTS: 14.
SPECIAL POWERS: Invulnerability (vulnerable to acid and magic).

WEAPONS	*Attack*	*Damage*	*Parry*
Right hand	50%	3D6+2	40%
Left hand	40%	3D6+2	30%
Right foot	30%	3D6+2	20%
Left foot	20%	3D6+2	10%

13. This appears to be just another tiger head carved into the wall. A successful Search will reveal it to be a hidden door. It is opened by pressing the tiger's eyes, and consists of the tiger opening its mouth. The room beyond it is 20'x30' and is a storeroom for various chemical/magical substances. There are five vials, and they are coded by color.

Blue is an acid that will destroy the guardian stone demon in room 12.

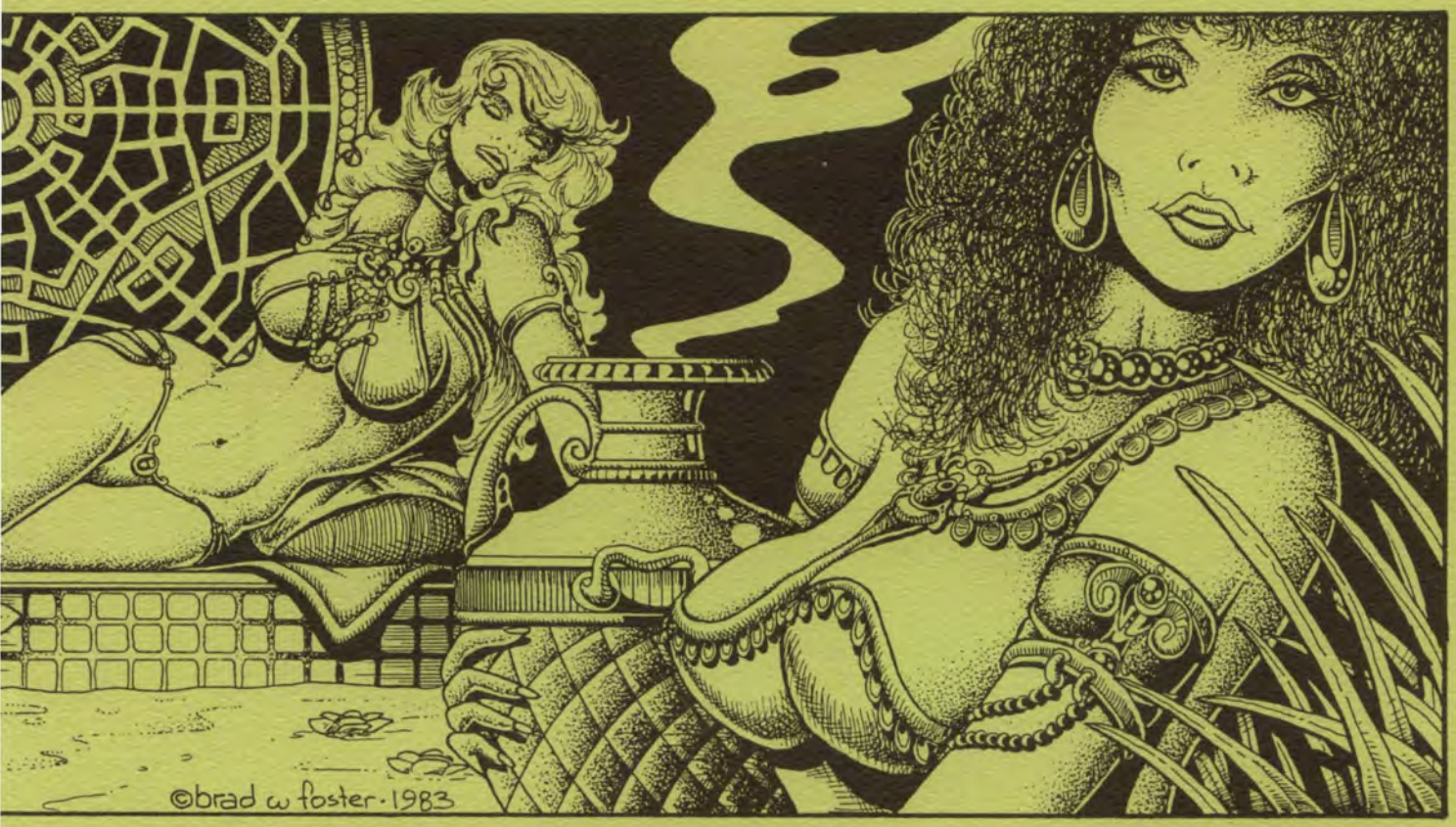
Black is a stone-dissolving agent of great power. In use it will cause noxious fumes doing 1D4 of damage to throat, eyes, and lungs of any who breathe them. It is also a deadly poison.

Yellow is another deadly poison. When drunk, it will do 10D6 points worth of damage to the drinker in about ten minutes at a constant rate. Applied to a weapon, it will do an additional 3D6 points of damage every time a wound is inflicted.

Red looks, smells, and tastes like blood, but is not. It is a universal antidote to all poisons.

White is an alchemical fluid that will change bronze into silver. If drunk, it is a poison; character must make its CON x1% roll or take the difference as points of damage. (A character that makes the roll has a chance to improve its CON one point by rolling a 7 on 2D6—see *Stormbringer* rule 2.7.)

14. This is the home of 3D6 beautiful houris. It is luxuriously furnished with the softest cushions, rugs, divans, chairs. There is always plenty of delicious food and wine on a table. There is a warm scented pool of water at the far end from the door. These creatures are succubi. Their very touch drains a man of strength (has no effect on women), especially the kiss and more intimate embraces. For every five minutes of dalliance game time, the



gamemaster should penalize the characters two STR points, but without telling the players. The gamemaster must keep track of this surreptitiously. If Elric is weakened to five STR points or less by them, they will be able to take Stormbringer away from him. These creatures can also attack the adventurers if necessary, but they have no weapons except their hands. Each one has a golden armband with the sign of Chaos on it—they are their binding talismans. If the armband is removed or destroyed, the girl-demon will vanish.

AFTERNOON DELIGHT (typical succubus) **Demon of Desire**

STR 11 CON 8 SIZ 11 INT 14 POW 10 DEX 11 CHA 24

HIT POINTS: 8.

WEAPONS	*Attack*	*Damage*
Hands	50%	1D4

15. Room of the Gargoyle. Znadagar is a demon of combat, 10' tall, horns, fangs, scaly purple skin, claws like dagger. It collects swords and knives, and will allow people to pass through who leave their weapons for its collection. Znadagar usually fights with a shape-shifting demon sword that has the following attributes: INT 12, DEX 20, STR 20, CON, 20, SIZ 3, POW 13. The sword adds 5% to the chance to hit, and it gets 2D6 in combat plus whatever its normal dice would be for its current form (i.e., as a broadsword it gets 1D8+2D6+1, a shortsword would be 3D6+1). See Znadagar's stats for additional description and powers. There is a 50% chance that any non-magical weapon that strikes him will break. Piled in one corner of the room are some 30 swords and dagger which characters can take if they need weapons and can get around the demon.

ZNADAGAR **Demon of Combat**

STR 21 CON 77 SIZ 22 INT 13 POW 15 DEX 14 CHA 1

HIT POINTS: 77 (major wound level 39).

SPECIAL POWERS: Pain (victim must make its CONx5% roll each turn or lose consciousness).

WEAPONS	*Attack*	*Damage*	*Parry*
Claws	80%	4D6+2	
Horns	40%	1D8+2D6	
Bite	40%	3D6+1	
Sword	60%	+2D6	60%

SKILLS: Dodge 90%.

16. Room of the Crocodile. Most of this room consists of a filthy pool of apparently stagnant water (it does circulate, but not much). A narrow ledge of a path runs along the north edge of the room and over to the door at the southeast corner—it is no more than 5' wide at the most, and only a few inches above the water. Below the surface lurks a huge crocodile—30' long and 8' tall. When floating at or near the surface, it looks something like a scummy log. It will use its tail to sweep victims off the ledge into the water. If it starts to lose a fight or manages to slay a person, it will dive under water and enter its lair (see 17).

GIANT CROCODILE

STR 42 CON 13 SIZ 41 INT 4 POW 10 DEX 9

ARMOR: 10-point skin.

HIT POINTS: 54 (major wound level 28).

WEAPONS	*Attack*	*Damage*
Bite	60%	1D10+14
Tail lash	60%	1D6+14

SKILLS: Swim 100%; Ambush 10%; Move Quietly 25%.

17. Crocodile Cave. A successful Search will find a Melnibonean Wheel for the reign of Sadric II; also numerous bronze and silver coins, and a dagger or two. The gamemaster may put any desired treasure among the bones of this cave, and if Elric's sword is taken away from him, it should be hidden here.

18. The Chamber of Harlequin. Harlequin is a low-level wizard plucked out of space and time to serve in Balo's Bastion. His face is painted dead white with exaggerated eyebrows and lips in black. He wears cap and bells, and a motley costume of black and green and crimson diamonds. He speaks medieval French, but has a smattering of the Common Tongue. He knows a basic death spell, but must lay hands on a person to use it (anyone he touches takes 16 points of damage). He has a collection of human skulls that he uses for juggling—he has been told that he will be freed when he collects 100 skulls. He currently has 95—he will do anything to get five more. He is totally mad.

HARLEQUIN

STR 8 CON 5 SIZ 14 INT 16 POW 16 DEX 8 CHA 8

HIT POINTS: 5.

WEAPONS	*Attack*	*Damage*	*Parry*
Dagger	92%	1D4+2	34%

SKILLS: Ambush 60%.

19. Harlequin's only treasure is his wand which is a potent demon repellant. One touch from it is fatal to any of the lesser demons.

20. This is grass shack in the jungle area—the home of N'Jumga the Black. He speaks the Common Tongue with a heavy accent. He can fight against the adventurers or join them depending on how he is treated. He will not voluntarily leave the jungle because he fears the succubi at 14. He is a cannibal and will look for a chance to get an adventurer into his pot.

N'JUMGA

STR 15 CON 17 SIZ 12 INT 9 POW 14 DEX 14 CHA 8

HIT POINTS: 17 (major wound level 9).

WEAPONS	*Attack*	*Damage*	*Parry*
Broadsword	46%	1D8+1D6+1	11%
Pike	62%	3D6+1	64%

SKILLS: Climb 30%, Dodge 56%; Tumble 87%; Sleight of Hand 52%; Set Trap 57%; Tie Knot 56%; Balance 78%; Listen 47%; Scent 43%; Search 92%; Taste 28%; Track 62%; Persuade 60%; Sing 90%; Ambush 62%; Conceal 99%; Hide 70%; Move Quietly 84%; First Aid 29%. Memorize 93%; Music Lore 45%; Speak Common Tongue 26%; Speak W'boma 95%.

21. This whole area is a jungle of huge extent. The soil is swampy and wet with quite a bit of hidden quicksand. Characters must make their POW x 5% to avoid it. There are also several stegosauri in the area—at least once while the party is in the area a dinosaur should attack them. The gamemaster may enliven the area by adding anything desired from pygmies to clakars. Note that this area is very large and seems to be open to the sky—a sun is visible—but it is bounded by a force field that keeps adventurers within the designated area.

STEGOSAURUS

STR 48 CON 21 SIZ 70 INT 3 POW 13 DEX 8

ARMOR: 10-point skin.
HIT POINTS: 79.
SPECIAL POWERS: Charge (character must make Dodge roll to avoid, damage reduced to 1D20 if character makes his DEX x 3% roll).

WEAPONS	*Attack*	*Damage*
Tail	37%	3D6
Bite	65%	3D8+4

22. This is an outcropping of high quality turquoise—worth its weight in silver on the market. It requires a See roll to spot it and an Evaluate Treasure to recognize it.

23. This is a wet swampy area and the exit to the jungle area. It will require a boat of some sort to cross it safely. Wading runs a risk of quicksand at POW x 3% to avoid. There are also poisonous snakes that may attack if a commotion is made. The snakes have only six hit points, but do 1D20 hits of poison damage and have a 30% attack chance.

24. An empty number—place it anywhere you wish and do anything you wish with it.

25. Lair of the Mantiger. The whole chamber is a huge crimson cave of living flesh with a maze of passageways in it. Near the end of it is a creature of chaos—a hybrid of man and tiger. It has the body and claws of a tiger, with the torso and head of a man. The manlike portion is armored and armed with a spear and eight javelins. It will allow people to pass safely only if Elric gives up Stormbringer. This cave is one of only two ways to the exit. It is also, in a mystical way, Balo's heart. If the adventurers realize it and attack the cave strongly, Balo will randomly teleport them somewhere else. Roll D100 for each character. Any number higher than 43 restores the character to its original place of origin along with anything won in the adventure. Numbers from 01-43 indicate locations within the Bastions of Balo.

MANTIGER

STR 29 CON 20 SIZ 17 INT 11 POW 9 DEX 14 CHA 12

ARMOR: 1D8-1 half-plate.
HIT POINTS: 25 (major wound level 13).
SPECIAL POWERS: Camouflage (blends with background, requires a See roll to spot it).

WEAPONS	*Attack*	*Damage*	*Parry*
Javelin	87%	1D8+2D6+2	
Spear	30%	1D10+2D6+1	38%
Claws	87%	3D6+2	

SKILLS: See 86%; Dodge 91%; Move Quietly 71%; Ambush 40%.

26. Summoning Room of the Gods. Any god of Chaos may be summoned in this room by any character. Summoned gods will answer questions, but they will only grant one boon—to be Champion of Chaos. Champions made here will be teleported out of the adventure along with any treasure won. The room itself is octagonal, completely done in mirrors, each with the sign of Chaos on it reflecting to infinity. Each mirror also has the name-rune of a Lord of Chaos. Speaking the name summons the god, but to read the rune, a character must make his Read High Melnibonean roll.

27 and 28. These are free numbers. Gamemasters may use them as desired.

29-32. Land of Monsters. At point G is a gigantic statue of Balo. Just touching the statue confers a one point bonus to every attribute—it also dedicates the character to Balo and gets him out of the adventure as a Champion of Balo. Henceforth such characters should be considered insane.

29. At this point are a number of cave bears equal to the number of people in the party. They are held in stasis until the adventurers arrive, at which point Balo releases them and they attack. Each character should have one cave bear to fight. Each bear gets two claw attacks on its normal strike rank, and a bite attack on strike rank 10. If both claw attacks hit, the bear will hold on and hug on the following combat round.

CAVE BEAR

STR 27 CON 16 SIZ 31 INT 5 POW 6 DEX 19

ARMOR: 4-point fur.
HIT POINTS: 35 (major wound level 17).

WEAPONS	*Attack*	*Damage*	*Parry*
Bite	65%	1D10+4	
Claw	45%	2D6+4	45%
Hug		7D6	

30. At this area the adventurers will be attacked by gigantic sabre-toothed rats. There are six of them. They each get one bite and one claw attack.

SABRE-TOOTHED RAT

STR 18 CON 9 SIZ 18 INT 4 POW 8 DEX 6

HIT POINTS: 15 (major wound level 7).

WEAPONS	*Attack*	*Damage*
Bite	50%	3D6
Claw	25%	1D6+4

31. Guarding the entrance to the Land of Monsters is one enormous lizard. It is fully the equivalent of a dragon, but it has no flame breath. It cannot get out of its area and can be dodged by successful Dodge roll by adventurers. When characters are coming back out of the Land of Monsters, the gamemaster may release the lizard and have it trail them wherever they go until they either slay or elude it.

GIANT LIZARD

STR 28 CON 22 SIZ 84 INT 3 POW 16 DEX 11

ARMOR: 10-point scale.
HIT POINTS: 94 (major wound level 47).

WEAPONS	*Attack*	*Damage*	*Parry*
Claw	81%	9D6	51%
Tail	40%	3D8	

32. This is a huge box 10' on each edge with a crank on one side. The box is blood scarlet and polished to a mirror brightness. The box is impervious to entry unless the crank is turned. The crank is hard to move—requires a strength of 15 or more to move it,

and some way to get at least 15' above the ground to turn the crank at the top of its circle. When the crank is turned the box will emit a merry calliope tune and out will pop the head of Balo. If Elric is present, the head will demand that he surrender Stormbringer. If Elric is not present, the Balo-in-the-box will tell some bad jokes and go back into the box. The gamemaster may use this device to answer character questions and to try to turn the other adventures against Elric by promising them wonderful things if they can secure the runesword. Aside from its mouth which is only good for badinage, the head is powerless, though the inside of the box is a get to the planes of Chaos.

33. This is the residence of Gohltur the Yak Rider. He is a comical but deadly warrior from Phum. His house most resembles a Mongolian yurt—round, low, and made of skins. Gohltur is a deadly foe to N'Jumga and also hates the Pan Tangians. He is an avid jewel collector and will not tolerate any insults. He will gladly join the party if spoken fair. Inside his hut is a carven ivory casket full of precious gems. The gamemaster may assign types and values for the jewels as he pleases.

GOHLTUR

STR 20 CON 18 SIZ 10 INT 16 POW 15 DEX 10 CHA 13

HIT POINTS: 18 (major wound level 9).

WEAPONS	*Attack*	*Damage*	*Parry*
Scimitar	100%	1D8+1D6+1	83%
Shield			58%

SKILLS: Evaluate Treasure 80%; First Aid 40%; Memorize 50%; Speak Common Tongue 70%.

34. Entrance to the Maze of Mirrors. The halls in both directions are completely lined with mirrors. Oil lamps swing from the ceiling every 20'. The mirrors are straight from the fun house—none of them reflects truly. Everyone should sense powerful magic in operation.

35. The Mirror of Death. Characters see themselves in it as skeletons. If they get within 10', tentacles will come out and grab them. Each tentacle can take 12 hits before being severed. 1D6 tentacles will appear for each character in range. A character can resist being dragged into the mirror as long as he severs at least one tentacle each combat round, and can get free if all tentacles of the original 1D6 are destroyed. If a character is dragged into the mirror, it becomes a meal for some unspeakable cephalopod. A critical hit with any weapon will break the mirror.

36. The Mirror of the Tiger. This mirror affects only characters with a CON of 12 or higher, and will never affect Elric. Anyone looking into the mirror and meeting these conditions must roll his CON or less on D100, or be changed into a tiger (see *Stormbringer* rules, page 101, for how to roll up a tiger—characters keep their own INT, CHA, and POW attributes). The enchantment can be broken if the tiger drinks Melnibonean blood, or if the mirror is broken. A critical hit with any weapon will break the mirror.

37. The Mirror of Stars. This mirror holds no reflections but the nightblack sky full of brightly shining stars in no pattern familiar to the players. If Gohltur is present, he will reach into the mirror and pull out a star in the form of a huge diamond. After he has shown how, anyone except Elric can do it, but only once. Each diamond will be worth 500 SS. Anyone touching the mirror surface will notice that it is not solid, people can pass through it. Anyone foolish enough to do so will be forever trapped in interstellar space. To Elric this mirror is just a mirror, and all he sees is his own reflection.

38. The Perverse Reflector. Anyone seeing their reflection in this mirror must make their CHAx1% roll or will undergo a sex change. Male to female cuts STR and CON in half while doubling INT and CHA. Female to male halves INT and CHA and doubles STR and CON. Again, Elric is immune. The mirror can be broken by a critical hit with any weapon, but doing so permanently halves the character's POW rating.

39. These are the quarters of Rorrim, the master and creator of the Mirror Maze. He hates intruders and will attack them if he sees a chance. He is a warrior as well as a minor wizard. At point C is a treasure chest containing 1000 LB coins and a small mirror that can be used to start fires by focusing light. It will also serve as a ray weapon worth 1D6 in combat—basic attack chance is DEXx3%. Point N is a stained-glass lamp casting multi-colored light on the tables, chairs, couches, etc., in the room. Rorrim's powers depend upon the lamp being lit. He is powerless in the dark.

RORRIM

STR 12 CON 11 SIZ 14 INT 16 POW 16 DEX 10 CHA 17

ARMOR: 1D6-1 leather.

HIT POINTS: 13 (major wound level 7).

SPECIAL POWERS: Ability to multiply himself by mirror image up to ten times creation nine illusions that cannot be harmed. Can instantly hypnotize anyone he beats in a POW vs. POW struggle. Broadsword has a bound flame elemental in it that adds 1D4 extra flame damage whenever it hits (Rorrim wears special gauntlet to use it).

WEAPONS	*Attack*	*Damage*	*Parry*
Broadsword	44%	1D8+1D6+1	10%
Shield			85%

SKILLS: Dodge 36%; Jump 42%; Tumble 87%; Juggle 104%; Pick Lock 75%; Sleight of Hand 56%; Set Trap 85%; Tie Knot 98%; Balance 20%; Scent 47%; Search 57%; See 100%; Orate 101%; Persuade 67%; Sing 100%; Ambush 55%; Conceal 40%; Hide 35%; Move Quietly 105%; Cut Purse 41%; Evaluate Treasure 93%; First Aid 69%; Memorize 78%; Plant Lore 32%; Speak Common Tongue 100%.

SUMMONINGS: Fire Elemental 50%.

MONEY: 1000 LB.

40. This is the beginning of a path leading into a huge dark cavern. Despite the massive stalagmites rising from floor to ceiling, there is considerable open space.

41 and 42. Each number represents a sleeping Melnibonean dragon. Nothing less than the Horn of Fate, a successful attack, or a command in High Melnibonean can waken them. These dragons have the ability to leave this cavern and travel among the planes. If Elric find them he can use them to escape the Bastions of Balo. See *Stormbringer* rules, page 106, if stats are desired.

43. This is a clutch of dragon eggs. Each is about the size of a basketball and is just about as rubbery. With proper care, such eggs might hatch and provide characters with pet dragons.

44. A secret door in the cavern wall leading to the long exit tunnel. To find it, characters must be in the right area and make a successful Search roll.

45. Another secret door that requires a Search roll to find. From the circus side, the doorlatch is coated with a contact poison that does 1D6 worth of hits to any character who opens the door unless well protected. The poison will continue to do the same number of hits once every ten minutes of game time until the character washes off the affected area.

46. The Exit. The long tunnel dead ends here in a green wall. Characters may walk right through it and find themselves back in the room they started in. From this point, all they have to do to get out of the adventure is wish they were out of it. Characters retain any treasure, equipment, or attribute changes that may have occured to them when they reawaken in the Young Kingdoms. Truly masochistic characters may pass through the green wall within the "Start" room and re-enter the Bastions of Balo again.

47. The Circus of Balo. This is a huge playground full of tents and amusements where all the people are dressed as clowns. There is a ferris wheel at point A, a bop-the-button test of strength booth at point B, and a pie-in-the-face booth at point C. The gamemaster may have clowns attack with whisk brooms and seltzer bottles. Improvise other circus trickery to amuse the players. If a character asks about something, such as a roller-coaster, improvise it. The whole area is a cartoon—toy with the players, but do not hurt them. The edges of the circus are great gray stone walls. A careful search of the south wall might find secret door 44. Ditto for the west end and door 45. The other way to find these exits is for a clown to reveal their existence after someone has made a Persuade roll. □

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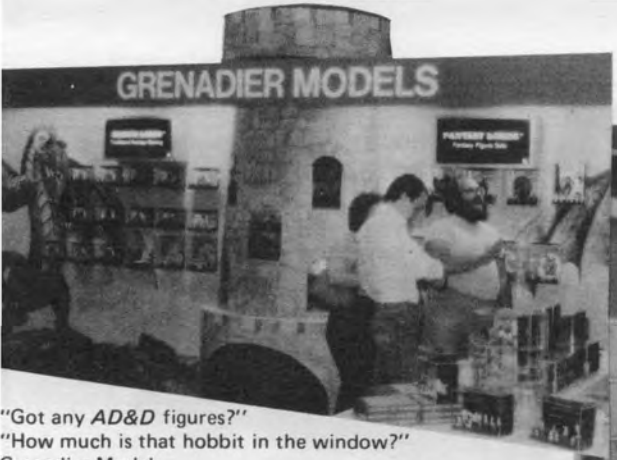

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Arizona Stackpole ("You can call me Mike.") flanked by Rick Loomis (left) and sexy friend, Flying Buffalo/Blade.

Gerry Bond (alias Gerry Klug), James Bond's dapper younger brother (left), and friend taking a break from demonstrating the upcoming Victory Games' *James Bond 007* role-playing game.

Marc Miller (left) and Loren Wiseman of GDW showing their age.

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My Life & Role-Playing

Famous game designers reveal their experiences with role-playing.

THERE AND BACK AGAIN

By Dave Hargrave

Dave was one of the first thirteen that contributed to the original "My Life & Role-Playing" column in the premier issue of Different Worlds. *We felt it was a good idea to get an update on what has been happening with the designer of* The Arduin Grimoire *in the past four years.*

The passage of years always seems to put a patina of golden glory upon even the most mundane of lives. And when said life has been anything but mundane, the memories tend to become even more wrapped in the aura of legend—at least within the mind of those remembering those good old days. But fear not, I will strive mightily to cut through that rosy haze and let in the cold light of truth and reality. Why I would this is anybody's guess, as I certainly much prefer the glowing memories (to said realities). At any rate, here then is my own "Where I Have Been" since last I wrote of my life and role-playing, lo those many years ago.

To begin with, there has always been two stigmas that had haunted me in all of my written/public works and/or image. The first was the oft said "*Arduin* is but a supplement to *Dungeons & Dragons*." The other was my work's unwarrented reputation for sheer blood-thirsty mayhem and destructiveness in its rules construction.

The first of these problems was, in fact, partially true in that at that time, several years ago, almost every game system on the market owed its very conception to the originators of fantasy role-playing as we know it, the ubiquitous *Dungeons & Dragons*. With that in mind, I set out to build a totally unique and easy system of basic rules that could be understood by total novices, yet which would be palatable to the more adult players.

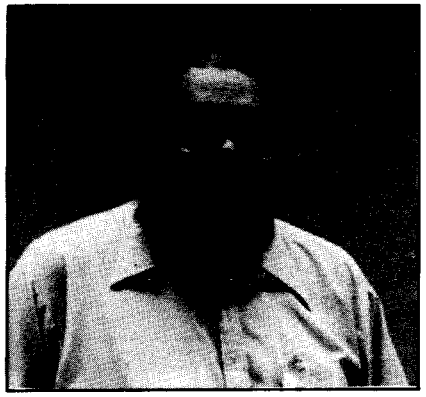
The resultant eleven months of research and playtesting culminated with the boxed game set called *The Arduin Adventure*. The rules had been thoroughly playtested by a game club that operated out of my game store in Concord, California, and by diverse others as I could persuade (adults and kids both, from Santa Cruz to Livermore). Each and every facet of the rules was a result of the feedback and continual modification/playtesting of those masses of players over those months. The final product was, I thought, the last thing that I would ever do in the fantasy role-playing field, so I wanted it to be the best that I had ever done.

The only problem then, as now, is that my publisher, Grimoire Games, never had sufficient funding to advertise it as it deserved. Because of this, the sales, while steady, have never been immense. Those players who had been using the old *Arduin Trilogy* bought the new basic rules and used it as a core to hang the Trilogy's more advanced rules systems upon, and pronounced it "good." I guess I will have to be satisfied with that.

About this time, the local powers that be decided that the entire city block that my store was on was in need of a "totally new look" and so literally zoned us all out of existence. We fought back as best we could, but with no street lights—and no streets!—it was simply too difficult for customers to get to my/our stores. One by one, we had to fold under the intense city pressure and go out of business. Thus ended a part of my life that had been my truest pride and joy. My store, the Multiversal Trading Company, had lasted about three years. In that time, it had actively supported a group of young gamers with everything from a place to play, prizes, counseling, and just plain one-on-one friendship. Now more than forty kids were out of luck, compliments of the city of Concord. I was out of luck as well, having sunk everything I could beg and borrow into the store. The resultant multi-thousand dollar loss started a process that would (with me kicking and fighting against it all the way) end with a bankruptcy about two years later, in the grim last days of the summer of 1982.

"For better or worse, I am now, and will always be, a game designer."

Throughout all of this, I kept myself afloat by continuing to work in the fantasy role-playing field, turning out a huge thirteen-part campaign called *The Heart of Darkness*, and working fourteen months on the revised Trilogy, which is still called *Arduin, Bloody Arduin*. At 660+ typewritten pages, it was the most difficult



and yet most satisfying thing I have ever done. Both of the products, for which I was generously given advances on royalties for, still sit unpublished for lack of funds.

Along the way I produced a role-playing superheroes rules system called *Glory Wars*, and a miniatures rules system for WW II aerial combat called *Sky Tigers*. Neither was picked up for publication by Grimoire Games due to the same "lack of funds."

Going back somewhat, to the last year of the store's existence, I had worked many hours with Archive Miniatures on putting out not only the Arduin line of figures, but upon their magnum opus called *Star Rovers*. At about this same time, I was ending my participation in most of the amateur press publications/fanzines due to the extreme amount of back biting and personal acrimony that was going on. I had just gotten married to Michelle McAvoy, a long-time friend, and typist of the manuscripts I had turned out, and just did not need any extra grief from verbal sharpshooters in ego zines.

I have sorely missed the camaraderie and contacts I had gotten from several years of writing in those publications, and have attempted (with mixed success) to maintain my correspondence with many people from England to Australia. A few have managed to come and visit for a while, and a few have, like me, just sort of dropped from sight. Yep, I too dropped from sight—at least as far as many of the fans of Arduin were concerned. Yet I was always active in the hobby, going all over the state to game stores and game clubs to show them how to play, signing autographs, and so on. We also have our own convention each May called GRIMCON, with this year's offering being the fifth in the series. Our last two have turned up over a

thousand people each, so I think that by any standard they could be called a success.

That kind of thing, after I had decided to get out of the fantasy role-playing business, has actually kept me solidly in it all these years. Something that I am now grateful for. I had always loved what I was doing, and I think, I hope, that love showed in what I produced. For better or worse, I am now, and will always be, a game designer.

The decision to get out of the game business was the result of many things, not the least of which was the closing of my store and, to me, the abhorrent bankruptcy proceedings. All of the movie deals, the book and magazine columns and projects, all of the board-game and fantasy role-playing products that had been planned or offered to/by me had come to nought in what seemed like one terrible month of carnage. I was heartsick and angry, and not a bit bewildered by all of the events that had destroyed before my very eyes just about everything that I cared about. I nearly gave in, and would have done so if not for the immediate and strong support that I received from my wife and my dear friends. I submerged myself in the weekly campaign games that have run practically unbroken for some seven years save for a six week period right after my move into the "far north woods." Arduin helped save me, gave me a direction, something to hang onto until I could get my mental legs back under myself. Then it became, again, my joy and honor to share with those, old friends and new, whom I dearly loved. Today, people drive as far as 250 miles to play and experience the world I have created, and which in turn, sustained me in some very dark hours. We won't part ever again, no matter what.

There is another little bit among all of the foregoing that needs mentioning now as well. And that is the second of the two things that were stigmas upon my work, the reputation for blood and guts that the Trilogy was known for. This was greatly ameliorated by the publication of *The Arduin Adventure* which was not, by any standards, capable of being so labeled. Further, I have been interviewed by born-again Christians and their review of the *AA* and me was complimentary to say the least.

This is extremely important to me because I had been deeply hurt by a previous piece of yellow journalism several years back that had used misquoting, untruths, and outright fabrications to make me appear to be something that I most definitely am not: a blood-thirsty preacher of pain and death.

My seven years in the US Army, my tour in Vietnam, my work for the Defense Intelligence Agency, all of these had made me just the opposite. I think that war is the ultimate stupidity, and that the one real drawback to most fantasy role-playing games, and wargames, is that the consequences of combat are never fully understood by the players. To swing a sword or fire an arrow is going to result in blood letting, pain, and even death—it is all a game to be sure, but the intent of the players is still the same. Thus I have always tried (with my Critical Hit Chart and such) to forcefully bring home to the players that battle and battle results are always ugly and terrible. I felt then, and still feel now, that the truest way to show people what war and battle really do, is to give them concrete examples to see, not abstract ideas that cannot be related to living, breathing beings. I think that my rules have done this, and perhaps now, there will be a new understanding of that earlier, more graphic mode of writing. A mode that, though I no longer feel compelled to have to include in future rules systems (having, I hope, made my point), will still be a trademark of mine where necessary.

Oddly enough, having undergone the darkest times of my life since Vietnam, I have also come into what is probably my most happy times. I have moved up north some 150 miles from San Francisco, to a little town called Willits. Being five miles into the Coastal Ranges from there, in the piney woods, is a real joy to me and Michelle. The quiet, clean environment, the lack of television, the beautiful all-cedar wood home that we rent, all contribute to a sense of well-being that is very hard to describe.

The old days where everyone was an amateur are gone forever I'm afraid, and for the better, I think. The new sense of professionalism that premeates the production of fantasy role-playing and other games has gone a long way in improving their overall quality. And I mean quality in content as well as in production values. Chaosium is a classic example of a small company that has gone from plastic zip-locked baggie games all the way to the exquisitely-illustrated, full-color cover boxed games with third-generation rule systems. Those companies and game designers that cannot or will not go the same route are doomed to fade from existence, as many have already done. The public demands quality now that the novelty has worn off, and rightly so—quality I hope to be able to provide them.

I am hoping this coming year will see my re-emergence in the public eye with game ideas that encompass many areas, not just fantasy role-playing. To that goal, I have let it be known that I will be available for projects outside of my traditional Grimoire Games label. Hopefully, this will result in my being able to work on many new ideas, some my own, some from others.

This then is where I have been and, perhaps, where I am going in the future. I have had my faith in myself and in what I have chosen to do with my life, reborn as it were. Whatever the outcome, I am glad that I have chosen this path to walk in my life. It is what I am, what is deep down inside of me. It is Arduin.

NOSTALGIA

By Gerald D. Seypura

Gerald is co-designer of Fantasy Games Unlimited's Wild West *and* Skull & Crossbones.

When I first started gaming, there wasn't any such thing as role-playing. How far back was that? Well, without revealing my extreme old age, I can tell you that my favorite game was *Gettysburg* which had just come out the year before. No, not that one, the one with the big squares on the board. Time passed and the new games came but slowly onto the scene, but they were all boardgames until that fateful day. Like most gamers, I had one major difficulty—opponents. I had just lost the last of a mediocre lot when I noticed the opening of a new establishment in town—The Studio of Bridge and Games. Games? I had to learn more about that and soon. I did. The following week, I finally broke away from the mundane world to investigate this establishment. When I first walked in, the first thing that I noticed was a bunch of guys crawling around on the floor with tape measures and such and pushing very small ships around. This looked weirdly interesting and I inquired as to what the heck was going on. This was my first introduction to naval miniatures. I was soon crawling around on the floor with the rest of them except I had as my constant companion, the mimeographed rules.

More time passes and I learn other games, such as *Diplomacy* which drives me crazy and also I get to play a lot of boardgames. Then came fateful day two. A bunch of us got together and formed an association of boardgamers. One day, at an informal meeting (there never was a real formal meeting), the proprietor of the establishment brought up the subject of a brand new game on the market called *Dungeons*

& Dragons and would we be interested in getting the thing? The consensus was: hell, yes. I had read the *Lord of the Rings* and the idea of even vicariously being able to live in the world had great charms. Little did I know, etc.

Came the day when it was in our hot little hands. We tore open the box (carefully) and zipped out the three little books that were ensconsed therein. We began to read. Hokey smoke! This was going to take more work then even the most pessimistic of us had imagined. It sure was, but taking everything into consideration, it was worth the effort. This was my first introduction to the art of role-playing. It was far from my last as a number of years of playing, gamemastering, and designing can attest.

The first gamemaster was the owner of the Studio, Bill Shelley. He got all of us started and did work nobly and hard. None of us neophytes really appreciated just how hard until we began devising our own adventures and running our own game worlds. Some of us went rather far in devising elaborate kingdoms and empires for our players to adventure in. I soon joined the group with a vengeance. I recall that I had two very thick notebooks stuffed with character sheets and the details of my world. If you have never tried it, you really cannot appreciate just how much labor goes into it. To top it off, I once had two campaign games going at the same time—*Dungeons & Dragons* and *Empire of the Petal Throne*. Eat? Sleep? They were vaguely defined terms applying mostly to other people. Since then, I have learned to moderate quite a bit. Still, though, once in a while, I miss the dear days of yore when we were innocent and mostly ignorant apprentices to this shiny new art form.

More time passes and we all discover the conventions. To the friendly folks in GenCon VI, it must have been like an invasion of noisy termites. We cleaned the place out to the walls. At least it seemd that way when we started back to the old homestead and there was considerable doubt that all of us could fit in the vehicles available. Whenever I go to one of the most recent conventions, I look back to those days in the VFW hall and the Horticultural hall with more than a bit of nostalgia. I have never had a better time at a convention then back in those early years of sweating out a *D&D* tournament in that hall. It was much more, ah, adventurous.

Since those days, I have run many a tournament and that is a tale in itself. It was in the spring of some year, and a bunch of the ambitious sports were

thinking back to the great time that we had at the previous summer's con. We then vowed to hold one of our own. I or somebody volunteered to hold the big tournament. It took me a month to design it and another month to kick the bugs out of it, but it ran beautifully and everybody had a good time with it. Thus fired by success and ambition, I ran the major for four years straight and got conned into doing two or three more as well as a new concept that has gone over fairly well; the Masters Tournament which is for gamemasters only. That one was always the most fun to run and I pretty much kept the honor to myself.

The latest phase of my career in role-playing started about three years

"I had two thick notebooks stuffed with character sheets and details of my world."

ago. We were kicking around ideas about the latest tournament when it occurred to me that I could probably write a game at least as good as the then new *Boot Hill*. I then started to kick around ideas as to how it should be done. Came the tournament and the appearance of the head of a game company. We tried the ideas out on him. It wasn't really a game at the time, but was more a collection of ideas and some roughed out tables. The fellow liked the idea and asked us to send down a manuscript as soon as we could. We got it together in three months, plus or minus a week or two. We? Why, me and my brand new partner Anthony LeBoutillier. We done it and it cost at least a gallon of sweat and twice as much blood to do it in that time. Now, we can see that we should have done it a little different here or a little more elegant there, but generally speaking, I am still quite happy with it. I just wish more people agreed with me, but that is part of the new game we got into.

The next project took a year and a bit and the one after that. . . Suffice it to say, we kept busy. We still are, more or less. I haven't got much time as I would like to for actually playing the darned things. At times it gets frustrating as the devil. I still get in some time though.

This brings me down to a little philosophizing. I am reminded of a little bit of what gaming has brought me over the years. It is a lot. I can boil it down a bit, though. Two of the best friends that I have were introduced to me through the games. One of them, Tony LeBoutillier, I have designed games with and the other has helped considerably in the design of adventure packs. There are other reasons for my admiration of them, but the common love of the game is not the least significant. There are others whose acquaintance I am glad that I have made. People who I have met at conventions and trade shows or who have just dropped in when I was running an adventure. All of them enriched my life in many ways. I can easily say that my life would have been much less interesting if I had not stopped in to the Studio way back when.

LIFE AS A NON-PLAYER CHARACTER

By Gigi D'Arn

Gigi D'Arn is the pen-name for Different Worlds' *gossip columnist. Her lively column has appeared in every issue since* DW*'s second issue.*

I always laugh when I hear that there are too few women role-players. Women role-play every day: we disguise ourselves daily with make-up, wear clothes which imply that the shape of our bodies is different than it actually is, and cope with a set of social rules which demand that (after we erase our stereotypical femininity) that we adopt power gestures and motives of the masculine world, which have all the ethical beauty and lovability of a hungry cobra. When women have to deal with role-playing minute-by-minute, more role-playing is not the relaxation most of us crave.

But men like to role-play, you say, and face desperate challenges daily. Heroic men! What men say and what they mean may differ: I think men mean role-extending when they talk about role-playing—men like to be stronger, they like to have swords, skills, and powerful magic, and the feeling that their characters cannot be conquered, and they in turn can conquer anyone. They are taught that in life, a real confidence-builder.

Society gives most men a role-playing aid, a woman. A woman deals with diapers, food, and balky machines, freeing the man to further develop his

life-image. "Life-image" is the role in which he so frequently loses himself that his emotions are blocked completely, so that he only responds in the ways he thinks he should (by virtue of his role).

In real life, only men get to be player-characters. Women are the non-player characters who put the geniuses through school, have their genetically-superior babies, and keep the floors clean so that the status of their husbands does not suffer. Women, though they are utterly stifled by their roles, are saved by the very realities which bedevil them, for most problems can only be dealt with, not conquered—therefore women are able to retain a tolerance and regard for others which few men can find. This makes most men melancholy on a fundamental level. I would not be a man for anything.

My parents were upper-middle class. My mother was slightly more intellectual than most of her friends, and she had a rather schnipsy reputation for her sense of design and decoration. (This is something which women are supposed to be good at, so my mother lucked out. Neither I nor my sister could match two colors with a hand grenade.) My father, who has since passed on, really only cared that the bills were paid and that he lived where he could plant trees.

I graduated from high school before role-playing games became an item. I went to CSLA, UCLA, and Michigan, and took double degrees in American literature and psychology. I also married.

My first husband joined the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA). It was through members Barry Detweiler and Connie James (not their real names; sorry—my format is anonymity) that I was first introduced to *Dungeons & Dragons*, sometime in 1976 or 1977. They owned a rather primitive first edition, the one where the hobbits and balrogs have the right names.

I am not a detailed person (I am friendly with percentages because they are like money) but *D&D* revealed to me that I could play women characters who did not have to act like I felt I had to—my characters could be anti-social, could refuse to change their underwear, and would never, never take along a pocket handkerchief like fussy old Bilbo. As long as my characters agreed that when Fate decreed that when they died, they died, the game was fun. A lot like life, when you think about it—a vampire is a player-character who cheats on his saving rolls.

Unfortunately, with the exception of the two people I named just above, the other role-playing gamers in my group were outcasts—they were all people who were chosen last for volleyball—too big, too small, too smart, too near-sighted, too honest, too different to be normal. Their differences changed them. I wanted to live through my characters, but they wanted to split hairs about what Mr. Gygax really meant about experience levels or charisma: my life did not revolve around such questions. A role-playing game was a cafe to have fun in, not another country to which to emigrate. I appreciated and enjoyed, but I did not become a fan, and never got wrapped up in attending or running cons.

I started sitting down at night and painting figures; I especially like painting those ducks by Archive Miniatues. I stopped projecting monologs (which we wives euphemistically call conversations) at my husband. Any wife will tell you that husbands are frustrating because they do not (or cannot) talk. When they marry, women think they are going to get a best friend as well as a mate. Good luck! A lot of women have children just so they will have somebody to talk to for a few years. Then the kids figure out the scam and go off and talk to other kids, leaving the mother completely alone.

"A role-playing game was a cafe to have fun in, not another country to which to emigrate."

So, what with me painting figures and my husband still busy, my first marriage vanished one Saturday evening like a cancelled TV series. We ran out of interesting ideas.

For a while I stayed in the SCA, flailing swords and making armor—but I got hurt in a melee, and my mouth kept getting filled with my foot at court functions, much to the merriment of the assembled nobles.

I pretty much dropped out of the gaming world—I had an advanced degree in counseling, and in California that is a license to set up shop for $30 to $60 per hour. I specialized in children with adjustment problems, though, and suddenly all my role-playing experience came in very handy. I could tailor adventures to bring out certain reactions in the kids' characters and in the kids themselves. Using the game as a sort of stalking horse, I could show them that they act in the real world or in a fantasy world according to their view of themselves. This work is ongoing. I use *RuneQuest* mechanics in a non-Gloranthan universe. I chose *RQ* originally because I liked the percentile systems, but it is really more useful because the philosophy of it prompts characters to remember that there are more ways to relate to other beings than via sword-point.

My second husband thought role-playing was madness. I introduced him to a character sheet once, and he fell through the floor. Osborne was a literal fellow, but rather pleasing because he always blurted out everything he felt. His fatal flaw was that his feelings were not very complex; the marriage became like subscription TV—the same movie over and over again. In marriage, the equivalent of turning to another channel is called adultery, not my cup of tea.

Am I hard to please? Maybe not worth it? Well, life is pretty much about pleasing yourself in long-lasting ways—my mother once told me that I could not blame anybody but myself for my taste, and taste, contentment, and responsibility is pretty much marriage for me. I think about children, but that seems to be a role even my characters are not ready for.

I first met Tadashi when he was working part-time in Gambit Games, a game store in San Francisco. Tadashi was always very courteous, and his knowledge of backgammon and go was inspirational. He could never turn into a good role-player, though. A few months later he suggested that I write a column for his new magazine.

I write gossip because I like people and because I think they are funny. The column gives me the opportunity to look at a lot of role-playing material and a chance especially to study trade magazines and talk to insiders in a way I could never do otherwise. I am still surprised that so many people study game systems who will never investigate how or why games are put together for economic or design reasons.

I do not do much recreational playing these days, perhaps a dozen times a year. I do play at least once a week with my kids, so I feel I am at least as active as most gamers.

My actual identity is a secret only so that my mailbox stays free of bombs. At cons you can recognize me by my glasses. □

Gigi apologizes, but there are no photos of her suitable for publication.

"My Life & Role-Playing"
Next issue:

Sandy Petersen's life story in
"Starting Young"

Metal Marvels

This column reviews die-cast metal miniature figures used to represent characters in role-playing games.

WIERD FANTASY and others

By Citadel Miniatures

Reviewed by John T. Sapienza, Jr.

Citadel Miniatures has been industriously producing their Fantasy Tribes, whole sets of a given type at a time. But they still issue individual items, including some humorous figures which they have cataloged as their Weird Fantasy line, and cost $1.10 each.

WF1 is the *"Kindly" Old Wizard* (their quotation marks), who stands beckoning somone over with his right hand. In his left hand, hidden behind his back, is a drawn sword from the scabbard at his waist. Never trust a left-handed wizard, perhaps?

WF2 is the favorite *Dungeons & Dragons* creature, the *Airial Servant*, complete with serving tray and teacups. (The spelling is right out of the catalog, not the correct "aerial.")

WF3 is the *Complete Adventurer*, and is the ultimate parody of the player who insists his character always has every item needed. The figure is stooped over, carrying numberless sacks, bags, weapons, and of course the kitchen sink.

WF4 is the *Spaced-Out Druid*. This time I am afraid I do not see the joke, but perhaps our California crew will.

WF5 is the *Dwarf with Inferiority Complex* about his height, who hobbles around on stilts to compensate. Funny, but do not show it to dwarfs.

Citadel is also in the process of improving its existing lines and confusing its customers by substituting new designs for current figures in its catalog. Better figures we all like, but it might have been simpler to drop old discarded models and insert new ones with new numbers in the catalog. Anyway, the new figures, like the old, average 25mm from the top of the head to the soles of the feet.

FF9 is the *White Wizard*, who stands as if greeting someone with staff and hand raised.

FA11 is tthe *Illusionist* walking jauntily along with a turban on his head and the usual Citadel profusion of containers on his belt and back.

FA3 is the *Cleric with Cross and Mace* who wears no helm or shield but at least has a plate cuirass for protection.

FA22 is the *Evil Cleric* in the catalog but would serve just as nicely as a good cleric and is better protected than FA3 is. Note the cross on his chest—clip off the horns on his helmet if they bother you (medieval templars wore the equivalent, though).

FA1 is a *Fighter in Plate* who is about to practice his backhand with his sword on somebody.

FA10 is a *Paladin* with a double-handed grip on a sword that looks much too small to need that. I would want to clip off that sword and glue on one more suitable before using this figure. Both this and the other paladin figure have battleaxes as backup weapons.

FA31 is titled *Paladin in Full Chainmail*, and this one uses a shield like a sensible chap along with his broadsword.

FA26 is *Fighter in Chainmail*, and was given a tiny shield and an enormous curved sword. He is also a lefty, if you are looking for one of this description.

FA32 is a *Half Orc* well equipped in full chain, helm, shield, sword, and bow.

FA14 is an *Elven Hero* similarly equipped, though with less chainmail and no helm.

And FA5 is a *D&D Druid* in his standard leather armor, wooden shield, and sickle.

I consider most of these improvements over the former models, and Citadel is to be commended for their policy of continuously striving for better quality. All these can be purchased individually for $1.10. □

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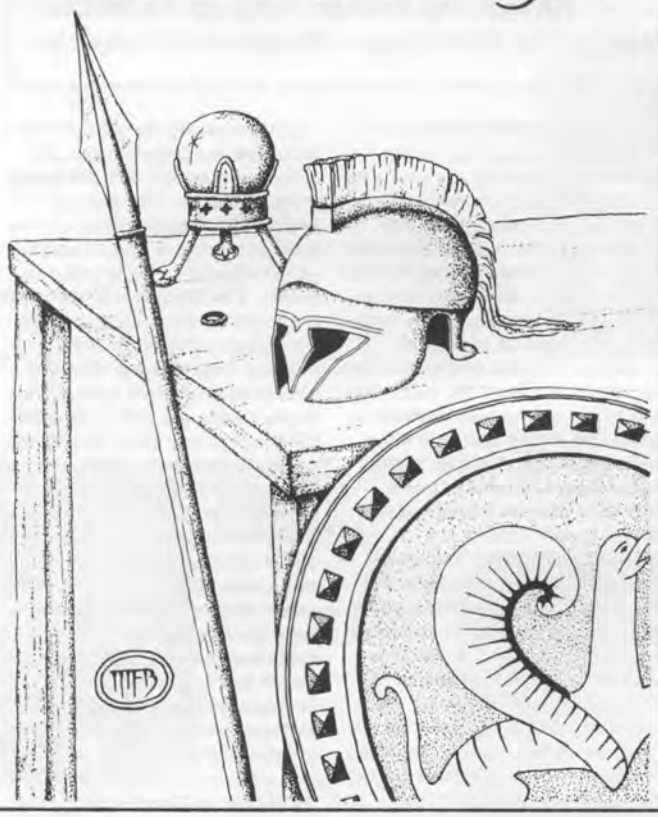

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Game Reviews

The Mechanoid Series/The Traveller Book/Espionage!/Droids/The Arkham Evil/Lady In Distress/Vault of the Ni'er Queyon/RuneQuest Companion

The Mechanoid Series:

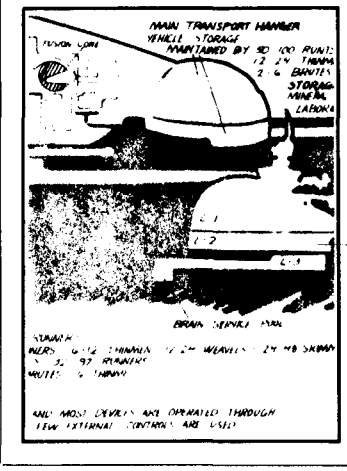
THE MECHANOID INVASION
THE JOURNEY
HOMEWORLD

By Kevin Siembieda (Palladium, $3.75, $4.95, and $7.50 respectively)

Reviewed by Ken Rolston

The basic concept of game design behind the Mechanoid series is the production of a cheap package with lots of material and ideas—a fast-and-dirty, leave-it-to-the-gamemaster style of presentation with a general indifference to editorial quality, layout, and literacy. For comparison, it is similar to the original *Dungeons & Dragons* three-book edition in organization and perceived product quality. Of couse, this is hardly a damning criticism, in light of the value of the original *D&D* books. Though the larger gaming companies have turned to more polished games and packages, there is still a market for the less elegant product, and it must be judged on the basis of its intended objectives.

The first book, *The Mechanoid Invasion*, is a good value, but the following books are progressively more expensive and less worthwhile. It can be characterized as "*D&D* in space," at least more so than any of the other science-fiction role-playing games I have encountered. The rules section tells you how to create a player-character's stats. There are character classes (pilot, filed scientists, light assault, etc.) with appropriate occupational skills and related elective skills. The psionics section is essentially a kind of spell-list magic system, complete with saving throws. The weapons section is a bit of an expansion on the wand-of-fireballs concept; from blasters to plasma ejectors, one can deliver up to 300 points of damage to a target. Armor, on the other hand, can absorb 70-150 points of damage, so things even out. There are the familiar character hit points; in addition there are structural hit points, which reflect how much damage armor can stop and how much punishment non-biological units can tolerate. The book has a selection of ground, atmosphere, and above-atmosphere vehicles, complete with missiles and particle beams (no system for movement or combat, however, for you dogfight fans). Most of this is very ordinary, with the exception of the comic-style illustrations; items of equipment are clearly labeled, and the visualization is effective and imaginative.

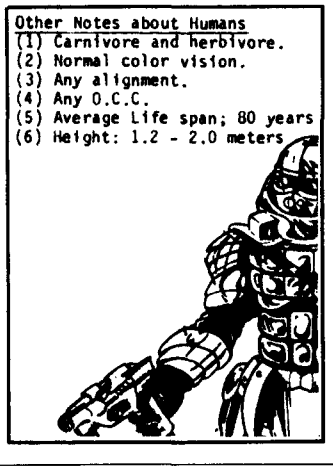


What makes *The Mechanoid Invasion* worthwhile, however, is its narrative conception. The scenario posits a relatively unimportant colony planet on the outskirts of a galactic civilization, suddenly attacked by a vastly superior force of cybernetic beings (the Mechanoids). The colony is totally unprepared, and there is no likelihood of relief in the foreseeable future. The situation is desperate; most of the planet-side colonies have been destroyed, with a partially successful evacuation to tunnels and remote mountains; a very few colonies remain unconquered. Most of the defenses are jury-rigged and adapted from peacetime technology; the Mechanoids have an indisputable military superiority, and there is little hope of doing more than postponing the inevitable complete destruction. The Mechanoids have begun defoliation of the planet; the small native population faces starvation.

This is a hopeless situation—fairly unique in role-playing, and potentially the source of some excellent heroic action. The Mechanoids are perfect villains: well-motivated, awesomely powerful, human-like enough to have understandable functions and psychology, inhuman enough to be horrifying in their hostility to biological life forms. There is an inherent limitation in the visualization of aliens in the other science-fiction role-playing games—the aliens look either silly or implausible. We just do not have an easy imaginative entry into alien biological forms. On the other hand, cyborgs are easily visualized and very plausible; all they are is machines—familiar bugbears of the popular imagination from *Metropolis* and *Modern Times* to HAL and other computer nemesis—that conceal a mysterious but familiar biological organism, isolated and made alien by its divorce from the biological world. Of course such a creature would be insane from our viewpoint, alienated from its biological origins, and what is more effective than an insane but perfectly logical villain?

The drawings and "personalites" of the different kinds of Mechanoids are good imaginative food for science-fiction role-playing adventure. The gamemaster section gives a little extra detail on the Mechanoids and on the strange indigenous culture of the besieged planet. Finally there is a very brief but imaginative setting for a scenario in the ancient underground transit system created by a long-vanished race.

I liked this book; it would provide an excellent background for a good science fiction adventure campaign. The product quality is poor; the gamemaster will have to do most of the work of setting up the campaign, and the rules do not handle movement, healing, or other important aspects of a full-scale campaign; nonetheless, the gamemaster can improvise these aspects as they arise, much as was done with the original fantasy role-playing games. The concept of the Mechanoids and the tragic and desperate plight of the besieged colonies is the virtue of the game, and could be easily adapted to any science-fiction role-playing game.


Other Notes about Humans
(1) Carnivore and herbivore.
(2) Normal color vision.
(3) Any alignment.
(4) Any O.C.C.
(5) Average life span; 80 years
(6) Height: 1.2 - 2.0 meters

Unfortunately the virtue of the series are less prominent in the subsequent books, and the faults more obtrusive. *The Journey* begins with a quick review of the rules of book one and an update of the situation on the colony planet. The Mechanoids have been only slightly inconvenienced by the valiant defenses of the humans, who discover that the Mechanoids are only toying with them, having the ability to wipe them out at any time. The Mechanoids are revealed to have a psychopathic hatred of humans, presumably a result of a hatred for the original biological fabricators of the Mechanoid race, who were very unpleasant to the Mechanoids before the cyborgs annihilated their creators. The Mechanoids have begun slicing up the planet like an orange, prepatory to disassembling and processing it, so the surviving humans are going to have to evacuate. The plan is to gain entry and stow away aboard the Mechanoid mother ship (the size of North America), there to continue a guerilla war against the cyborgs.

The book contains some nice new Mechanoids and a colony defense ship called the Balrog Destroyer; 21 of these city-block-sized battleships were discovered in packing crates marked "Agricultural Irrigation Pumper." From this point the quality of the material begins to go downhill. Three pages are devoted to describing the battleship—to what purpose? There is no ship-to-ship combat system, and the enormity of the ship calls into question its possible application in a role-playing scenario; the scale is just too big. There are a couple pages of new devices and Mechanoids; a half-page is devoted to an extremely general diagram of a Mechanoid base, with no detail or explanation of any of the features. The new Mechanoid forms and transport ships are just bigger and more rococo; there is no substantial addition. By increasing the scale, the detail is proportionally reduced; the lack of detail both limits the usefulness of the material and seriously dilutes the effectiveness of the atmosphere in the setting. The section "The Journey" gives some tables and diagrams of the mothership where the colonists will be stowing away and fighting their guerilla war against the Mechanoids. Since the mothership is the size of North

America, and the material covers about 13 pages of text, I do not need to tell you that it is not particularly detailed. The random encounter tables are uninspiring, and the diagrams are on a large scale with a minimum of detail—not an effective condition for creating a credible and captivating setting. The final disappointment comes with the section on magic. The first page is illustrated by a guy with a staff, cape, and a headdress adorned with goat horns. I was not particularly happy with the psionics system; I am no fan of arbitrary and extensive spell lists, particularly in a science-fiction game, but there is ample precedent in the literature for psionic powers, though seldom in such profusion and lack of coherence. However, the bald introduction of *D&D*-style magic struck me as a final abdication from science-fictional credibility.

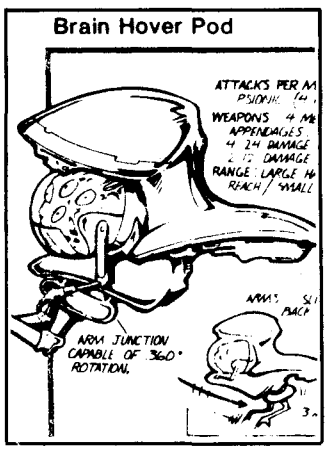
Homeworld represents increasing evidence of the limitations of the series with a virtual disappearance of the original values of the first book. There is a comprehensive rules summary which is much clearer and well-organized than the sections in the preceding books. However, the scenario abruptly veers away from the Mechanoids, who are shuffled offstage in a stunning *deus ex machina*; they apparently disappeared suddenly all over the universe, except in their homeworld. Bye, bye, Mechanoids. Enter to center stage a Robin Hood-style alliance of shady good guys—a bunch of humanoids, dragons, and amphibians. These aliens are perfect examples of the weak plausibility that the Mechanoids did not have; they look silly and their alienness is inadequately supported in cultural distinctiveness. Creating a believable alien race requires a lot of detail and imagination; the alien races in *Homeworld* are described in a page each, with illustrations, and they just do not come to life.

The book also contains sections on alignments and insanity which reflect the incremental concept of game design: add a new section or table to make it more comprehensive. There is nothing wrong with this; magazines are full of these embellishments and variants. Nonetheless, it is important to distinguish between piecemeal additions to a game system's volume and the revision of a game system that coherently integrates new elements into the original rules concepts. Alignment and insanity are not essential components in the Mechanoid system, as they are in *D&D* and *Call Of Cthulhu*, respectively, and their addition to the rules in *Homeworld* is of relatively little importance in increasing the value of the original concept of *The Mechanoid Invasion*.

There are eight pages of starships, warp systems, and equipment without a tactical or strategic context; there is no system for space travel or combat. A comprehensive treatment of weapons and personal vehicles organizes materials from earlier books and offers some new toys. The gamemaster section introduces some new insectoid horrors that are rather ordinary, with illustrations housefly-shaped creatures carrying blasters. There is a recap of the Mechanoid background material, most of it reprinted from the earlier books. A planet map of the Mechanoid Homeworld and vague base and bunker diagrams comes next, followed by loosely-organized dollops of "Elements of Role-Playing Games," "Notes About Gamemastering," encounter tables, and an obscurely relevant comic strip.

The Mechanoid series will never be confused with a carefully designed role-playing system; such was not apparently their intent. The disorganized rules and scenario presentation is always evident, but reaches epic proportions in the third book when contrasted with the more polished role-playing games that are currently the standards of the market. The psionics and magic systems represent no innovations in role-playing games; in fact, it faithfully reproduces the limitations of the earliest forms of fantasy role-playing games in this respect. There is an unfortunate lack of a detailed setting, ironic in the light of a comment in Book Three, page 93, about how important it is to "create a strong environment." The weakness of the setting and background material increases with the ambition, volume, and disorganization of each subsequent book, with the fortresses and bases at the height of inanity in Book Three. The entire series wanders from its clever original coherent conception into a hodge-podge of narrative elements; the energy dissipates as the story wanders away from the original confrontation of a vastly overwhelmed group of humans fighting a desperate battle against a host of insane machines. The proliferation of gadgets and bug-eyed monsters weakens rather than augments the value of the later books.

Despite all these faults, I highly recommend Book One, *The Mechanoid Invasion*. It has an original and dramatically compelling conception, imaginative and well-visualized. The limits of its production quality and game design are minor in contrast to the charm of the ideas in the book. The other two books are progressively poorer values; if you buy the first book and like it, there may be a good justification for buying the other books simply to have access to the more comprehensive rules sections and the material describing the Mechanoids, but you will probably find them a disappointment compared to the first book. *The Mechanoid Invasion* would adapt easily to other science-fiction role-playing games; there is no particular virtue to recommend the rules system of the Mechanoid series, other than the fact that it closely resembles *D&D* and will be comfortably familiar for players and gamemasters used to that system. At $3.75, *The Mechanoid Invasion* may be the best bargain available in supplements for science-fiction role-playing games; it is unfortunate that the other two books are not so useful.



THE TRAVELLER BOOK

By Marc W. Miller
(GDW, $14.98)

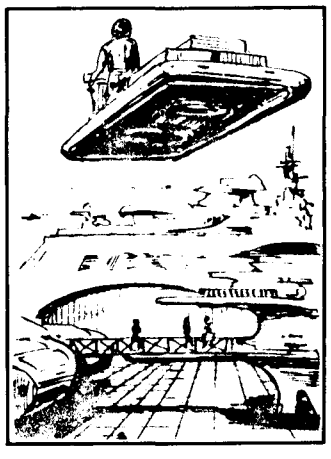
Reviewed by Tony Watson

This review is aimed at two sorts of people: those that already have a set of *Traveller* rules and may be interested in updating them, and those who do not have a set of rules and are considering purchasing some. Veterans may be able to determine whether they want to buy a new edition and potential buyers may be able to decide if this is the version of *Traveller* for them.

Physically, *The Traveller Book* is a 160-page hardcover book. The interior layout is quite a bit changed over the small book format. Perhaps most notable is the fact that *The Traveller Book* is rather profusely illustrated. In some cases, the pictures are used merely as illustrations, though GDW has done a good job of linking the pictures to the text with which they appear (starships in combat in the starship combat section, animals in the animal section, and so on). In other cases, the drawings perform a more practical task in that they facilitate the visualization of particular objects. For example, there is a series of drawings of every type of personal weapon, from spears and clubs through submachine guns and laser rifles. There are also some very fine drawings of the eight small craft and nine standard starship designs for the starship design section. These accompany the text descriptions for the vessels and help considerably to show the players just what a given sort of spacecraft looks like—a certain aid in more imaginative role-playing.

Another aid to understanding and using the rules is the fact that all tables, charts, and lists dealing with a given topic are grouped together on two or four opposing pages located centrally in the pertinent section. For example, the tables dealing with crew salaries, ship revenues, and the availability of cargo and passengers are all located together on one page in the middle of the "Starship Economics" section. Similarly, complete listings of personal equipment, vehicles, and weaponry are found all together on one page, and the charts and procedures important to personal and starship combat are grouped together rather than spread throughout the text. The convenience and time savings are substantial; charts and tables are very often the heart of a role-playing game, and are especially important during actual play. Having all related information available at the gamemaster's finger tips is a distinct improvement over the first edition rules.

This brings us to the contents of *The Traveller Book*. If you have the first edition *Traveller* rules and were to take a look at the hardback version, you would find numerous, and in some cases, significant changes. These, for the most part, are the changes made in the second edition rules; *The Traveller Book* text more or less



follows that of the second edition rules, but not without some additions and changes.

Significant changes over the first edition include some changes in skill application and the fact that scouts get two skills per term rather than just one. Starship combat has undergone very important alterations. The scale has been changed to 1 mm equals 100 km, and each turn represents 1000 seconds. A critical hit entry has been made to the starship damage table, refering the player to a separate damage table, which includes the possibility of ship destruction via explosion. The list of standard starship descriptions has been expanded to include those found in the supplement *Citizens of the Imperium* as well as a new design, the 400 ton patrol cruiser.

The personal combat section has been modified to include a broader range of situational effects, such as darkness, concelment, and zero-G, although the archaic weapons that made their appearance in the second edition have unfortunately been left out. The movement rules translate the range band system into the 1.5 meter square grid system used in *Azhanti High Lightning* and *Snapshot*, although not without a contradiction between the text and the table. The dice of damage each weapon causes has been streamlined over the first edition; all pluses and minuses have been dropped and all weapons cause a set number of dice damage. The definitions of wounds (light and serious) have been tightened and the guidelines for medical care and recovery more clearly explained. Unfortunately, armor still serves to lessen the chances of being hit rather than damage taken, despite the fact that GDW has taken steps in this direction in the combat system used in recent *Traveller*-related items, such as *Striker*. Science fiction fans enamored of weapons like blasters, disintegrators, and the like, will be a bit disappointed as the weapon list still tips heavily in favor of rather mundane projectile guns such as automatic rifles and shotguns. Overall, though, this section of the rules has been improved, and benefits greatly from consolidation of the requisite charts and tables.

Two other areas of the rules have been expanded considerably, to the benefit of both players and gamemasters. The range of equipment entries has been increased with a number of new items. Text records and hand computers make their appearance and the variety of vehicles has been broadened to include such machines as dirt-movers, speeders, and even ocean-going destroyers! More important, however, is the new emphasis *The Traveller Book* places on encounters. Encounters, be they with animals or sentient life forms, are the core events in any role-playing session. *The Traveller Book* recognizes several types of encounters, including animal, routine, legal, rumor, and patron, as well as any the gamemaster may choose to put into the course of the adventure. Animal encounters are handled in a separate section. The rules for generating creatures are essentially the same as those in the first edition, but the list of example events to be inserted in the animal encounter charts is more varied and imaginative. The chapter on encounters with non-player characters and rumors is substantially improved and made considerably more useful. Routine and random encounters are discussed along with the use of rumors and patrons. New charts for both have been included to facilitate the use of these very important devices in the gamemaster's arsenal. The reaction table and the tables listing weapons available by tech level and law level are provided to assist the gamemaster in determining the nature of the encounter.

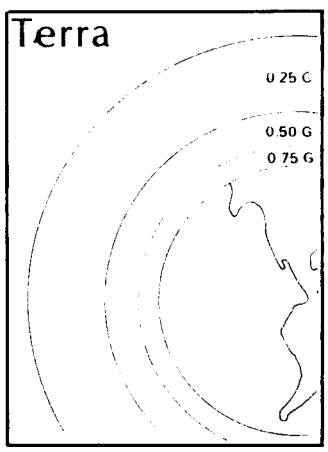
Marc Miller, the designer behind *The Traveller Book*, has taken great pains to make playing *Traveller* easier and more interesting for both player and the gamemaster. This is evident by the reappearance of material culled from Book 0 in the *Traveller* line which became available in that version of the rules. This material resurfaces in the introduction and sections entitled "Referee's Guide to Adventuring" and "Basic *Traveller* Activities." In these sections, Miller does an excellent job in describing how *Traveller* can best be played. The section on adventuring is especially valuable, most obviously for novice gamemasters, but certainly not without value for us old-timers. The importance of setting and catalysts are dealt with and the use of "seeds" or devices to keep a campaign moving, such as the "gimmick," "push," "pull," and the "enigma" are explained. This is a valuable insight into the "art" of gamemastering, and should heighten the participant's enjoyment of the game, regardless of which side of the table he is sitting on.

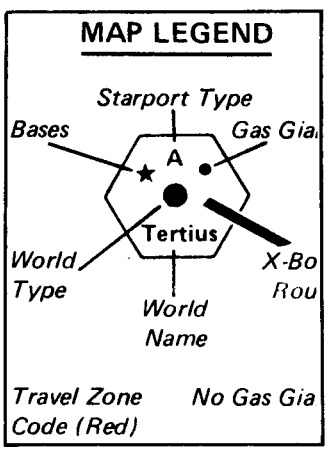
The balance of the book is devoted to material intended to inform the players and provide examples for adventures. There are four pages of library data concerning the GDW Imperium which will help the beginning gamemaster set the stage of his early adventures, and a map of the Regina subsector. The "Traveller's Guide to the Universe" section contains several short essays on the nature of the Imperium, megacorporations, and the Spinward Marches, site of so many of the GDW adventures and *Fifth Frontier War*. Lists of pregenerated characters, thugs, and brigands, and animal encounters are provided. The "Into the Subsector" section reprints several of the short scenario outlines from *76 Patrons* along with a "Casual Encounter" and an "Amber Zone" from *The Journal of the Traveller's Aid Society*.

Also reprinted from other sources are *Shadows*, from the double adventure *Annic Nova/Shadows*, and "Exit Visa." These are complete adventures, ready to play. The former includes all the maps and diagrams that appeared in the original version.

As for my recommendations concerning *The Traveller Book*—that depends on who you are. If you are not currently involved with *Traveller* and considering what version of the game to pick up, this is a good bet. It is somewhat cheaper than the deluxe version, and though it does not come with the map that version does, it is certainly more compact and easier to carry around. If you already have the deluxe/second edition rules, you might not find the few, relatively minor changes worth the price tag. Players with the first edition rules should certainly consider updating their rules sets and this edition will do just that.

As it stands, *The Traveller Book* is the best edition of *Traveller* available, while *Traveller* remains the best of the science-fiction role-playing games. Despite improvements, this edition is not without its faults. The text indicates that pulse lasers do more damage than beam lasers, but this is never addressed in any of the charts related to damage. The sequence of play for starship combat is still not quite right, and computers and computer programs remain inordinately expensive. The imagination behind the design, the clear and concise writing and the attractive presentation of *The Traveller Book* far outweigh any faults it might have; it is a significant improvement of an already excellent game system.





ESPIONAGE!

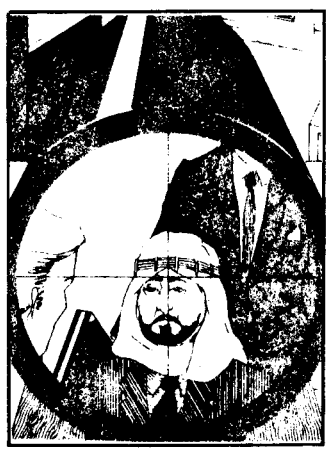
By George MacDonald and Steve Peterson
(Hero Games, $12.95)

Reviewed by
Russell Grant Collins

Espionage! comes boxed with a 64-page rulebook, a 16-page scenario book, and three six-sided dice.

Espionage! is the second game using the Hero Games' game system first introduced in *Champions*. The result of using the same basic system is that any *Champions* player can easily switch to *Espionage!*, or vice versa. Only some of the subsystems are different, as necessary for the different genre.

The advantage of using this system becomes apparent when characters are created. Since, like *Champions*, you pick your attributes and skills, you can play 007 or anyone else in the various fields covered by this system. Even TV detectives like Remington Steele or Jim Rockford can be created with no problem.



Characters in *Espionage!*, while built using the same methods, are usually weaker than in *Champions* because they have only half the number of starting points and the disadvantages lose potency twice as fast and are twice as tough, although the costs of skills tend to be lower as well. There are also maximum values for statistics, after which the cost doubles (for example, after a speed of 4 is reached, it costs 20 points to raise it to 5). Considering the different genres, that is as it should be.

The concept of a package containing the minimum needed to get into a given agency is introduced in this book. It has certain advantages, making it worth purchasing as a starting player. There is also the concept of brownie points as well as experience points. Experience points are for what you do and brownie points are for how the agency you work for perceives you.

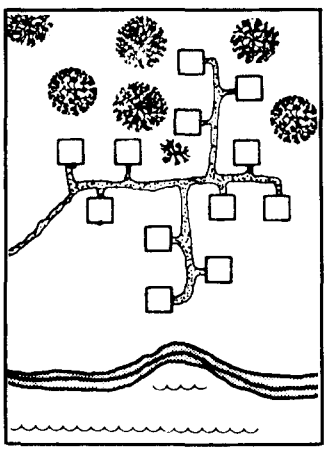
The sample agency that they use is the CIA. The main problem with this is that, being an actual group, some players might be more knowledgeable about them than the gamemaster. I would have preferred the creation of a fictional counterpart, perhaps UNTIL or SAT from *Champions* (SAT is introduced in *Deathstroke*). Using one of those two would have made the system even more handy for *Champions* gamemasters. Still, if I wanted to introduce the CIA into any campaign, I now have plenty of information with which to do it.

Since the systems are basically the same, *Espionage!* can be used as a supplement to *Champions*. The new rules include lesser Martial Arts, which cost less, but only allow the player certain of the maneuvers and aiming shots, allowing the characters to try for the head at a minus due to size, but with damage multipliers if the attack is successful.

There is also a page of guns and charts of other weaponry for the gamemaster tired of arming all his agents with ordinary blasters. The table of Perception Roll modifiers is also helpful. (Hitting the *Champions* character with a few of these superior agents might surprise him.)

The adventure, entitled "Merchants of Terror," is very well done. It has three parts to it as the players attempt to locate a stolen atom bomb which has been offered at an auction for terrrists. There are contingency plans to get the players to the next encounter, no matter how the current one turns out and options to make things easier (or harder) for the players. There are also a set of pre-generated player-characters to use in the adventure which also are good samples when building new characters.

I recommend this game to anyone interested in a spy role-playing game. It is complete and great fun. Another plus is that any module for Blade's *Mercenaries, Spies & Private Eyes* is fully compatible with *Espionage!*, meaning that module for the game are likely to be twice as common as for most games.



DROIDS

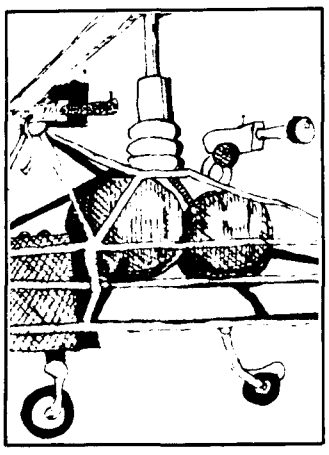
By Neil Patrick Moore
(Integral Games, $7.95)

Reviewed by Ian R. Beste

Droids: The Cybernetic Role-Playing Game is the first role-playing game I have seen in which the player-characters are non-organic beings. Each player in *Droids* controls an intelligent mechanical creation trying to survive among the rubble left after a vicious war in which Machine triumphed over Man. The idea is not a terribly new one, having been used in Metagaming's old *Rivets* microgame, and, before that, in Vaughn Bode's underground comic *Junkwaffel*. But does this setting really make for new and interesting adventures? What does it offer that other role-playing games do not? It does have an uncomplicated droid design system, a decent combat system, but beyond that it has value only as a supplement to other games. By itself, *Droids* is a skeleton of a game.

Physically, *Droids* reflects the overall increasing graphic sophistication of role-playing games. It is an 80-page digest-sized rulebook. The layout is clean and professional-looking. The illustrations, four drawings of droids and a map, are a bit sparse. Various charts and tables are scattered throughout the text. In other games, this results in constant page-flipping, but in *Droids* only a few charts need to be frequently consulted, and for combat, all the necessary tables are on adjacent pages. The table of contents is quite useful and makes up for the lack of an index.

The organization of the rules follows the traditional role-playing rules pattern: introduction, player-character creation, movement, combat, scenario and campaign information. Droid creation is process involving three factors: construction points (CPs), power consumption (PC), and bulk points (BPs). CPs represent "cost," PC required energy input, and BPs size and weight. The designer says that 1 BP equals 0.1 cubic meter and 12 kg. BPs also equal a droid's "absorption," the amount of damage it can take. The player is given 20 CPs with which to build a droid. The component parts, or "units," are described in the chapter on units, and are summarized in an appendix for quick reference. The player can select from 21 types of transport units (from wheels to helium balloons to hydrofoils), three types of manipulative units (arms), six types of power units (solar cells to batteries), five types of viewing units, nine types of sensors (radar to metal detectors), six types of communication devices, 33 types of weapons (from machine guns to matter disrupters), ten types of armor and anti-energy screens, and 18 types of miscellaneous units, including a spotlight and a camouflage screen. Brains are not listed as they are the same for all droids. Players select units, making sure that the power consumed by them is balanced by the power output of any power units chosen, though not all power-using units have to be powered at once. The BP sum of all the units chosen gives the player an indication of his droid's size and weight; most of mine were around 50 to 44 BPs, that is, 600 to 660 kg. This whole process is fairly quick, and not difficult for those who have mastered the skills of creating warships for *Traveller* or building characters for *Champions*. However, the system does not tell one what the droid actually looks like. This allows the players to indulge their own crazed imaginations. The designer does provide a list of hints when designing a player-character droid. Interestingly, to do as he suggests seems to require a few more CPs than the players are given.



The chapter on movement has all its important information contained in four tables that cover droid speed in km/hr, droid speed in meters per six-second combat round, chance of droid breakdown, and chance of surviving a crash landing. Each table cross-indexes transport unit type with terrain to give either a speed or a percentage chance of breakdown or survival.

Combat is simple and well-explained, and is broken down into three phases per combat round: initiative, movement, and fire resolution. Initiative is determined by each rolling D100, higher roll getting to fire first. Initiative is determined once per combat. Fire resolution is broken down into five steps: range determination, weapon aiming, hit determination, hit location, and damage resolution. Weapons are classified into three types depending upon their ability to selectively hit targets. Hits are determined by comparing the numerical attack value of a weapon to the size in BPs of the target. Certain weapons that miss hitting a specific unit on a droid target still have a chance of hitting another unit on the same droid. The hit location process determines which units on a droid were hit by first determining the BP size of the unit to be hit, then choosing a unit closest in size to that BP size determined. Damage to droid units is determined by cross-referencing a die roll against the weapon types on the Weapon Damage Table. The amount of damage is calculated by rolling 1D6 per weapon damage factor but may be reduced by armor and screens. If the unit is reduced to half the amount of damage it can take, it stops working. Full damage totally destroys the unit. This whole process is thoroughly explained in an example of combat. Other combat rules cover concealment ("the referee will have to be the final judge"), ramming, damage from falling, power plant explosions, crash landings, short circuits, and water damage.

The lengthy chapter "Creation" refers to the creation of a scenario or campaign, and covers such topics as non-player droids, robots (stupid droids), "mega units," organized societies, an encounter table, weather, and a sample scenario with an example of play. Three non-player droids (NPDs?)

are included. There is also a so-called "flowchart" provided for creating non-player droids. As it is laid out, it is anything but a flowchart, and will take a good 10 to 15 minutes to figure out. A list of additional units includes such inane entries as "Unit: Blender. . . Purpose: Unknown." There are some general rules on experimental units. The far-too-short section on organized societies begs the fascinating concept of droid societies, being only some general thoughts with no practical hints for the referee. The encounter table merely lists chances of an encounter, without any sort of direction as to what has been encountered. The weather table concentrates on catastrophic weather, such as acid rain, radioactivity, and volcanic ash, the latter which, according to the table, occurs at least twice a year anywhere on the globe. The small scenario included gives the referee two robots and two non-player droids to slug it out with player-characters. This scenario shows very little imagination or role-playing potential.

In fact, this criticism of the example scenario can be applied to all of *Droids*. Nearly all of the rules text is devoted to player-character and non-player character droid creation and combat. There is little effort to explain who built these droids, why they are allowed to roam about, how they could interact outside out of combat, and what they seek to accomplish by their wanderings. In short, the necessary motivations for a character's role in a role-playing game are absent. In *Dungeons & Dragons* characters seek to gain riches and glory, not always through combat; in *RuneQuest*, characters may rise to prominence exercising only non-combat skills; in *Droids* characters move and fight, and maybe salvage parts off smashed opponents. Machines do not make it as characters, and *Droids* does not make it as a role-playing game. Compare *Droids* to Steve Jackson's *Car Wars*: *Car Wars* is basically a wargame with role-playing aspects as each player controls a driver fighting to survive on a highway of the future. *Droids*, like *Car Wars*, allows one to design a "vehicle" but dispenses with a fictional flesh-and-blood extension of the player. *Droids*, lifeless, pale, allows only cybernetic shoot-outs, a wargame masquerading as a role-playing game.

My recommendation: if you like hack-and-slash, get *Droids*. If you need some robot design rules for a campaign of, say, *The Morrow Project*, look at *Droids*. Otherwise, skit it.

Roll 1		
Row	Essential Units (	
1	Leg	Leg
2	Camera	Cam
3	None	No
4	None	Lig
	Weapons: (roll rov	

THE ARKHAM EVIL

By John Diaper, et al
(TOME, $8)

Reviewed by Larry DiTillio

The Arkham Evil is the first in a series of *Call Of Cthulhu* adventures produced by TOME. It is very good and bodes well for this group of writers on the gaming scene.

The Arkham Evil consists of three separate adventures which are actually linked (though the players may not figure this out). All three have numerous layers, the "onion skin" approach which is suggested in the *Cthulhu* rulebook. Players begin on the outermost layers and as their adventures and investigations peel back the onion skin they may discover the real heart of the matter (or perhaps not, the adventure is very complex). At any rate, lurking at this heart is none other than the crawling chaos Nyarlathotep himself. Nyarlathotep's scheme involves an asteroid known as the Wanderer which passes by Earth about every 400 years or so. When the Wanderer comes close to Earth, fragments of it break off and plunge into the atmosphere (as planned by Nyarlathotep). The idea is for minions of Nyarlathotep to gather some of these fragments and use them to create a gate by which the crawling chaos can enter the plane of Earth and wreak appropriate havoc there. The unfolding of this plot through the three scenarios is both intricate and well-conceived, and makes good reading for the keeper.

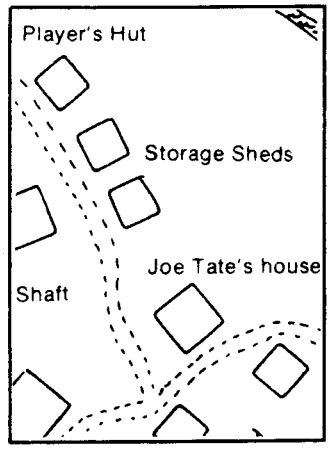
Act 1, "Into the Throat of the Beast," involves a band of druids who worship Nyarlathotep and their ritual sacrifices on his behalf. The druids are led by a man named Mogh Ruith, who possesses hypnotic powers and some spell ability. Ruith appears in a number of other guises and is the main villain of the piece, appearing in Act 1 and again in Act 3. The druids are in the Appalachian Mountains near a coal mining town called Gibbsville. The investigators arrive in this town to investigate a mysterious cavern found in one of the mine shafts. This cavern is the remains of Mi-Go mining operation. The druids used it for their rituals at one time and it was there that Mogh Ruith sold his soul completely to Nyarlathotep. The goal of the investigators interestingly enough has nothing to do with the machinations of the druids. It is a classic McGuffin, designed simply to put the investigators at the scene of the action and it does this nicely. It is even conceivable that the investigators might totally miss the deeper layers of the plot and simply do their job (this would not ruin the other acts). Subtle is the word for the design of this adventure.

Act 1 is liberally loaded with role-playing opportunities, mainly concerning events in the town and around the mines, but also leading the investigators into the scheme of the druids. In what is basically the final scene (although there is a scene following it) the druids sacrifice a young girl who instead of dying is impregnated by an avatar of Nyarlathotep. The girl is led away, she will give birth to a spawn of Nyarlathotep in the future and this "person" will show up in act 3. The avatar will remain in the valley where the sacrifice takes place for three days and then will vanish. As given, it seems unlikely that the investigators can stop the sacrifice. No information is given as to what happen should the investigators stop it, or try to take the girl away from the druids afterwards, and this could cause problems (in fact, it would totally negate most of act 3).

Act 2, "The Wanderer," is four years later and the investigators are sent to Arizona to retrieve fragments of a highly radioactive asteroid. The investigators will have no inkling that this has something to do with the events in Gibbsville. The introduction states that a list of alternate characters is provided in case the characters in act 1 are dead or incapacitated, but I could not find this list anywhere. What is provided is an interesting and simple system for determining what happened to the investigators in the four years between acts 1 and 2. This includes damage results, sanity loss, and increase in skills.

Investigators should have a mess of trouble in act 2 since they are opposed by no less than three other factions who are all trying to get the fragments for themselves. These other factions are deadly and their leaders are viable non-player characters for other adventures. The radioactivity itself is another danger, perhaps even greater than the human foes and players may find themselves rotting away before they know it. The scenario equips them to deal with it, but they will still have to be a cautious bunch to collect the fragments. Along the way, they might also encounter some sand dwellers and a dimensional shambler, however the adventure seems to give them an even chance to succeed and push on to act 3.

In act 3, "And the Dog shall Know You," the investigators have returned to Miskatonic with their fragment and the action begins two days after this date (time plays a major part in TOME's adventures and keepers will have to keep strict record of it). The act is part murder mystery, part horror. The spawn of Nyarlathotep conceived in act 1 is now a student at Miskatonic. His goal is to kill enough people to tranform into his final form, basically a good old multi-tentacled horror. He uses the psychic energy of his victims to grow to this stage, draining and aging them horribly simply by a touch. In this form he is to swallow one of the radioactive asteroid fragments and thus become a living gate through which Nyarlathotep will pass. The investigators are asked to investigate the murders by the dean of the school, though



again the scenario seems to push the keeper into making certain they discover only minimal clues, so that the final scene will remain undisturbed.

Overall, *The Arkham Evil* is a fine piece of work. Its atmosphere and detail are literally staggering. Historical characters like Pancho Villa and the Molly Maguires (a band of miners who used terrorist activity to fight for better pay and conditions) are used to good purpose, being manipulated by non-player characters in a sort of Illuminati conspiracy style. The non-player characters are a major plus of the work, I can see using many of them again and again. Minuses go to one area that TOME is hideously deficient in—artwork. The art is categorically terrible and I sincerely hope it will improve in future scenarios. A "possible minus" goes to the fact that this adventure has very rigid parameters and no explanation of how to handle breaches of these parameters. I believe the authors feel that there is only one way to play any scenario and sometimes they are too emphatic in how they want things to run. *Call Of Cthulhu* requires great flexibility on the part of the keeper and TOME's adventures seem to ignore this. Otherwise, if you like *Cthulhu*, you will like *The Arkham Evil*. In fact, I am of the opinion that with some work you could find it very playable for games like *Daredevils*, *Mercenaries, Spies & Private Eyes*, or *Justice, Inc.* as well. Your players may hate you for it, but at least they will have fun while they are dying.

LADY IN DISTRESS

By Mike Carr and Corey Kobernick (TSR, $5.50)

Reviewed by Anders Swenson

This is a scenario for the spy-versus-spy game *Top Secret*. It follows TSR's standard format of a coverstock cover folded around, but not stapled to, a 32-page inner pamphlet. The inside of the cover contains a detailed plan view and elevation of the various decks of the motor ship *Corona*, while the text describes an adventure which take place aboard the ship.

The scenario involves a group of terrorists who hijack the ship in the manner which has become all too classic in recent times. The characters must defeat the hijackers and locate a cache of mutated disease germs which were hidden somewhere on board.

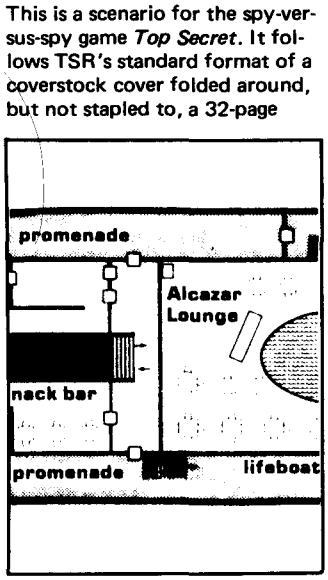
Lady in Distress begins as a group of agents are diverted from another mission to tackle the hijackers on board the *Corona*. The agents must land on the ship, group themselves, and locate and defeat the terrorists. The terrorists are placed in logical and effective locations on board the ship, and most of the passengers have been sent ashore in life boats, setting the stage for a more or less straight search-and-shoot missions (dungeon crawl?) on the *Corona*. This done, the agents must still find the germ cultures.

The centerfold pages of the book are unnumbered and are intended as pull-out game aids. They include additional plan views and elevations, a briefing sheet for the original mission from which the agents have been diverted, and a set of pre-generated character-agents which were used during the play-testing of the adventure.

The bulk of the text is a room-by-room description of the interior spaces of the *Corona*, obviously the "Lady" of the scenario title. The *Corona* is a standard-looking Mediterranean cruise ship, intended to convey happy tourists between Greece, Monaco, Morocco, and such-like touchstones for the sun-worshippers. Looking at the text, one is impressed by the fact that every space on the map is keyed, named, and described. One is also impressed that as far as seems necessary, this passenger ship bears a remarkable resemblance to other passenger ships, with perhaps a matter of size being the main factor which makes the *Corona* different from the *Queen Elizabeth I* or the *Titanic*. Once below decks, the agents might be able to tell the difference, but the players probably will not be able to, so this collection of plan-views and sections is widely applicable.

Running the given scenario (fortuitously included with the ship plans) could be accomplished in many game systems, too. *Top Secret* is a game with which I am familiar, but I use other systems much more often. I was very pleased to discover that the mechanics of the ship hijack scenario were not dependent on subtle twists and turn of the game-situation rules so that none of the flavor of the game is lost by translating it to, say, *Call Of Cthulhu*, or even *Traveller*. I may well run *Lady* in my *Cthulhu* campaign someday (only maybe it will not be just a vial of deadly germs this time. . .).

There is an increasing interest in adventure games set in contemporary times—*Top Secret*, of course, but also *Call Of Cthulhu*, *Gangster*, and *Daredevils*, and even the superhero games, all of which are set in times easily identifiable as our own. While it is easily arguable that passenger ships are even more obsolete as a transportation mode than passenger trains, the romantic interest they inspire is great, and luxury liners and cruise ships account for a disproportionate amount of settings for the romantic adventures on which we base our gaming. Therefore, the description of even a small diesel-powered derivative of the ocean-going behemoths of the past is a welcome addition to the game-master's arsenal of resources. The fact that a plausible adventure has been laid over the basic ship in such a way as to make the least distortion of the basic vessel description is in some way laudatory, but in others incidental to the basic value of this scenario booklet. The lady may be in distress, but she is not distressed merchandise. Everybody go out and buy yourselves a ship! Now, when are they going to do *Airport*?



VAULT OF THE NI'ER QUEYON

By Stefan Jones (FGU, $5)

Reviewed by William A. Barton

Vault of the Ni'er Queyon is an adventure scenario for *Space Opera*, FGU's science-fiction role-playing system. Subtitled "A Sector Spanning Quest," the scenario concerns the search by a group of player-characters for a lost treasure world left by the Ni'er Queyon, one of the Forerunner races who ruled this part of the galaxy more than 100,000 years ago. Its action literally could span not only one but several star sectors as the characters follow leads, true and false, that may or may not lead them to the fabled hoard.

Vault is set up more as a campaign framework than a single adventure that could be played in one or two sittings. While it has a definite beginning (two, in fact) and a specific conclusion, with important stop-offs along the way, the action between those two extremes can go wherever the imagination of the Starmaster and the inclinations of the players wish to take it.

Vault provides two separate methods for involving the player-characters in its action. The first allows the group the opportunity to rescue a retired linguistics teacher who has stolen a book of archaeological importance from a criminal, whose thugs are actively involved in retrieving the tome. The book, called *Times Past, Vol. 1*, tells of the Ni'er Queyon and their great hoard of art treasures on the planet Phatzis—a booty believed still to exist. If the players help the man, or steal the book from him themselves, they may learn of this fabulous treasure, the exact location of which is, unfortunately, not contained in this volume. The logical course then, as the book indicates, is to go to Phatzis to find Vol. 2 and the key to the treasure. In the second possible teaser, the adventurers are hired by a wealthy canine merchant to find and return his daughter, who has stolen one of his ships and gone off on some crazy adventure. Following her trail, they learn of her theft of an old book (guess what) and her departure for a world called Phatzis in search of a legendary ancient treasure. Of the two, the first beginning offers more action and provides more information of use in the quest immediately. The events of the second, however, are

necessary to understand later occurrences. I suggest combining the two, a relatively simple task for most experienced gamemasters.

Regardless of the method used to set the players on their treasure hunt, they will run into the same problem right off—there is no world called Phatzis in the library computers. There is, however, a Fatzis in Mercantile League territory. Since this is the only lead—and since it will soon become apparent from rumors picked up at starports along the way that the merchant's daughter is Fatzis-bound—it should not take much of a nudge to start the group on their journey.

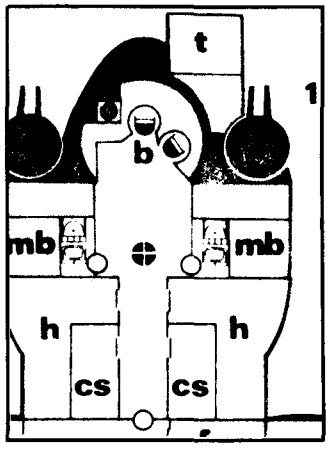
It is here the Starmaster may run into some problems. The various worlds of the adventure are not located in any particular sector, but are left up to the gamemaster to place in his own *Space Opera* universe. With the action spanning several sectors, this could prove difficult if the gamemaster only has one sector of his own worked out—and even so if using the few widely scattered pre-generated sectors released by FGU thus far. He may also have trouble coming up with enough side adventures and encounters along the way to keep the potentially long trip interesting for the players. In this vein, the adventure's value would have been greatly increased had author Jones taken a page or two to set down several mini-adventure ideas or encounters off which the gamemaster could play, similar to those in his recent *Opponents Unlimited Villains & Vigilantes* playaid.

The major stopping points along the way are well fleshed out, especially Fatzis, which is fully documented, geologically and biologically, including political and sociological information on its dominant aquatic alien race and its Mercantile League ties. (A jarring note, however, is an illustration of the avians that makes them look like claw-footed "turkeyoids"; I would have expected to at least see webbed appendages on these birds.) Significant, though less detailed, information is provided for three other worlds as well. Maps of various ruins and alien installations on these planets are included, one of which hides the lost treasure trove of the Ni'er Queyon.

Vault of the Ni'er Queyon exhibits a few careless errors here and there, such as the listing of Fatzis as orbiting its sun at a distance of 250 light years. My biggest disappointment was with the ending, however. It could prove extremely frustrating, after all the characters' efforts, to actually find the Ni'er Queyon's secret vault: unless they have brought along an enormous amount of portable firepower, they will at best be denied the majority of the treasure they have sought through so many hazards and are more likely to end up dead when they face the hoard's guardian. If the characters do win their way to the heart of the Forerunner races, the gamemaster will have to augment the sketchy descriptions of the complex and its treasures as provided in the scenario. I get the feeling Jones expected few characters to actually make it this far, so did not bother to go into much detail on this important aspect of the adventure.

Despite these problems, however, I find *Vault of the Ni'er Queyon* still worth recommending as a solid example of how an "open-middled" (as opposed to an "open-ended") campaign-length adventure can be devised. *Vault* has a set beginning and ending, yet allows the Starmaster the opportunity to exercise his own imagination as the players work to get from one to the other, rather than relying totally on pre-generated material, which while valuable when you are short of time, can often hinder the imaginative thinking processes so valuable to creative role-playing when relied upon too greatly.

Whether or not one actually wishes to run the adventure as written, *Vault of the Ni'er Queyon* could prove useful as a source of ideas and inspiration to almost any *Space Opera* gamemaster, as well as those of other science-fiction role-playing games.



RUNEQUEST COMPANION

Edited by Charlie Krank
(Chaosium, $8)

Reviewed by Mike Dawson

The *RuneQuest Companion* is Chaosium's attempt to replace their now defunct *Wyrm's Footnotes* magazine, and is also a vehicle for the reprinting of some early *Footnotes* articles that are presently difficult for *RQ* players to access. Supposedly, further *Companions* will be published as new information on *RQ* and its associate worlds, Glorantha and Questworld, is written and collected—although this status will bound to change with the Avalon Hill publication agreement.

The first *Companion* includes material that is almost exclusively related to the world of Glorantha. It contains a reference table for indexing all published Gloranthan cult relationships in table, as well as a reference list of all cults that have been published by Chaosium, Gloranthan or Gateway. There is a large sampling from the Jonstown Compendium, a very short story about "The Harlot of Alone," a large solo adventure, an article on Walktapus cooking, an overview of the Holy Country, a detailed description of Gloranthan unicorns, a letter called "The Dispatch of Fadabius" that examines the politics of the Dragon Pass area after the freeing of Sartar and just before the rising of Tarsh, a nuts-and-bolts article on illusion magic in *RQ*, a short article on the Praxian plant skullbush, a short description of Prince Argrath's entry into Boldhome, a Gloranthan mystery short story, more information of troll that did not make it into *Trollpak*, excerpts from Sir Ethilrist's "A History of My Black Horse Troop," a poem dealing with the Ivory Plinth, and comprehensive *RQ2* errata. It is quite a varied compilation of material.

With so many subjects covered by the *Companion*, it is almost ironic that the major problem the book has is that it is too short. Much of the material is of extremely high quality, of great use to anyone who is attempting to gain a real understanding about the world of Glorantha. However, there are only 72 pages in the book, and $8 is a rather stiff price to pay for the material considering that there are some useless as well as bad material.

Luckily, there is not a large percentage of bad material in the *Companion*. "The Harlot of Alone" leaves the reader wondering just what the editors included it for, and how anyone is supposed to use any information that might be concealed in its text. "The Maze of Shaxry Oborok" is a thoroughly random and lifeless solo adventure that is just another rehash of solo dungeons and does nothing to advance *RuneQuest* as a game, and is not even fun to run in. Dull is the word to describe the pages it takes up in the book.

Aside from those pieces, the articles in the *Companion* all have something worthwhile to contribute, though it may be a small amount. The real highlights of the volume are the articles on the Holy Country, the Jonstown Compendium, and the work on unicorns. This type of article should be strongly encouraged by readers for inclusion in future *Companions*, since they form the core of information necessary for running a colorful, believable game world.

The excerpts from the Jonstown Compendium go far toward making the price of the *Companion* easier to bear, since they are printed in extremely small type that packs a huge amount of informaion onto one page. However, this makes the best information in the *Companion* the most difficult to read. Why not just expand the typeface a little more, and include a few more pages to put it all in?

The Holy Country article is very valuable, though it does completely gloss over the most important person in the Holy Country, the Pharaoh himself. Information is included about how he became the Pharaoh and how he intervenes in civil wars in the Holy Country, but there is virtually no information on what the Cult of the Living God is like. It would be expected that such a cult would have a major effect on the region, but it is not really dealt with.

Artwork throughout the *Companion* is a combination of new material and the best of the old from early issues of the *Footnotes*.

The potential purchaser of the *Companion* should take a long hard look at the material presented in the *Companion* before considering buying it. If your campaign needs information on the Holy Country, unicorns, illusions, or any of the other material presented there, then it may be worth the price. But if the information presented there is of only marginal use to you, then the *Companion* will be at best only a marginal use of your money. □

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Adventure by Design

The philosophy behind designing and gamemastering scenarios.

USING PUBLISHED SCENARIOS

By Ken Rolston

The suitability of a published scenario depends on how you plan to use it. If you want an adventure you can use with a minimum of gamemaster prep time, you will want a package with a linear narrative design. If you are willing to do some work, but want to add the detail and imagination of professional writers to your own production, and in the process, save yourself some time and labor, you will be looking for multiple option adventures. If you intend to do most of the adventure design yourself, and are willing to put in a lot of time and effort into your work of art, you will want open-ended adventures.

Linear Adventures

These are the familiar dungeon-style modules. The players will experience the adventure episodes in the order intended by the designer. The episodes should be detailed, well-structured, and should anticipate player responses, channeling them directly to the climax. The gamemaster will have to do a minimum of preparation; often a quick reading is sufficient, with a few minutes of extra study on any important non-player characters or alien races or beings to be encountered. Scenarios originally designed as tournaments are ideal for this purpose; they are intended to be read quickly by gamemasters, to be unambiguous in interpretation and easily referenced and run with a minimum of gamemaster adaptation. TSR's modules are good examples of this style of design.

Multiple Option Adventures

These may be dungeons or wilderness adventures. The player goals are well-defined, but there are several sequences of episodes which will permit achievement of the goals. The gamemaster may use only those episodes provided in the packs, or may design or improvise his own, often with the assistance of random encounter tables. The gamemaster has a greater burden of preparation, since he permits his players more freedom in choosing which episodes they will experience; many episodes must be studied even though they may never be used. Further, the gamemaster must be prepared to improvise to some extent; therefore his study of background materials, particularly non-player characters and potential encounters, must be more rigorous. Chaosium's *Borderlands* pack is an example of this design style.

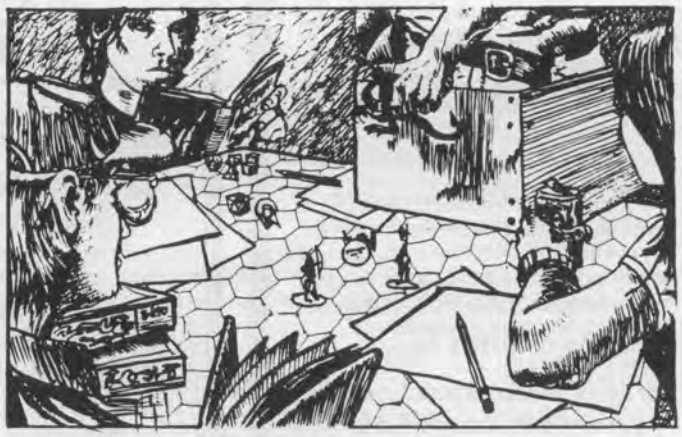
Open-Ended Adventures

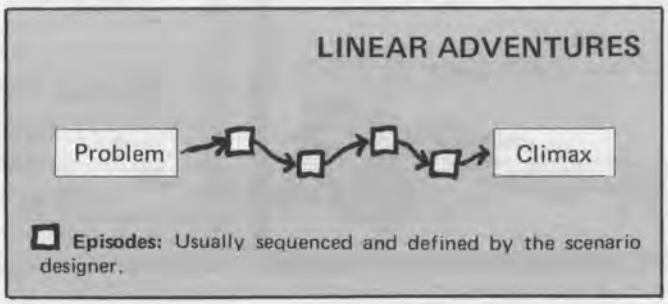
These are not strictly scenarios, but settings for scenarios. They are usually large-scale campaign packs for wilderness and/or city adventures. Detailed information on the history and character of societies is given, many non-player characters and their interrelationships must be given, and many physical locations must be illustrated and described, even though the characters may never visit more than a few of them. Some packages may include specific scenarios, but many do not. The gamemaster and the players are expected to design and improvise the action; the supplement only gives the background which may inspire or support the action. Chaosium's *Thieves' World* is an example of this type of supplement.

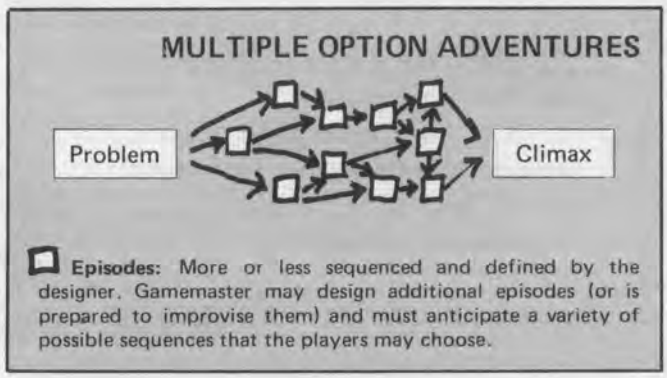
Identifying and Using Supplements to Meet Your Needs

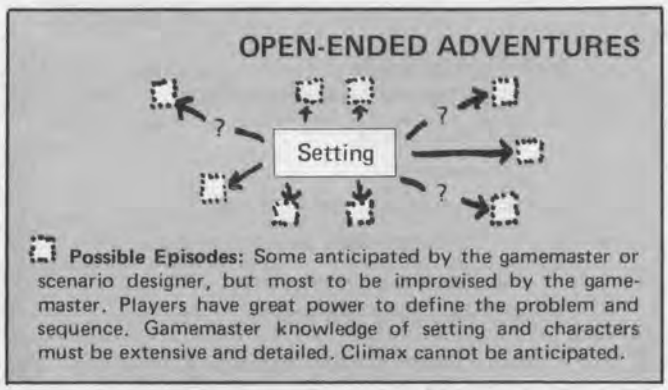
These three types of supplements seldom exist in pure form; most supplements partake of elements of all three types. The distinction is drawn to help a gamemaster pick appropriate game masterials for his needs. The more linear an adventure is, the less time and preparation the gamemaster must invest. The greater the freedom of choice you offer your players, the greater your task of preparation. Linear adventures are usually the best organized for gamemaster use during a game session—well-structured and handy for referencing monsters and character stats, well-segmented with logical stopping points for individual sessions. However, because they are well-organized for gaming, they often read poorly, while background materials for more open-ended adventures can follow familiar non-fiction and fiction prose styles, making them more pleasurable reading. The natural development of tastes runs from the linear adventures to more open-ended, campaign games, but I recommend a dose of dungeon-crawling when the burden of gamemaster prep causes waning enthusiasm in a large campaign. Note that dungeons lend themselves well to linear adventures, while cities almost demand an open-ended style, with the attendant gamemaster preparation responsibilities. □

This column, next issue: "Adapting Published Materials for Your Campaign."





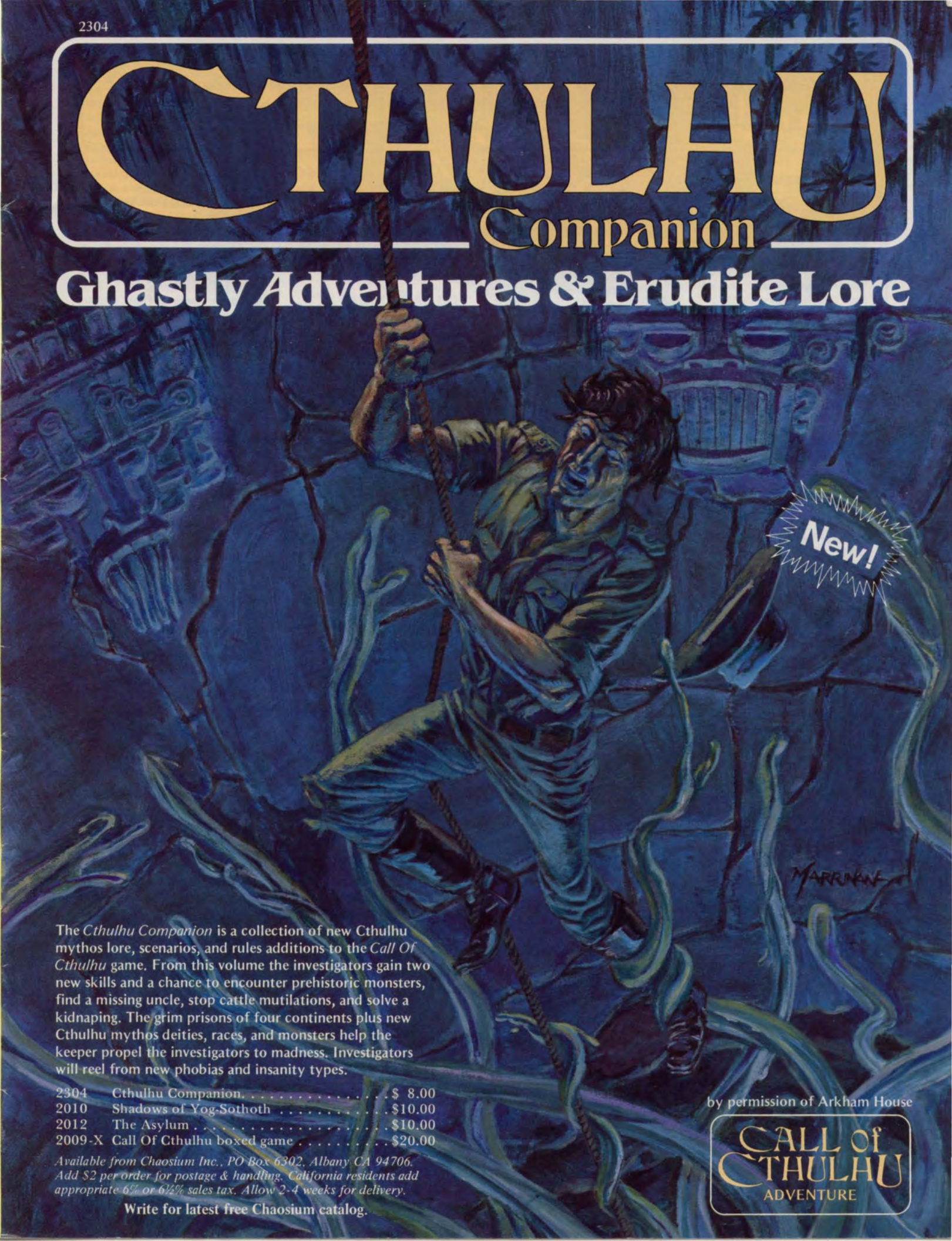

MULTIPLE OPTION ADVENTURES
Problem
Climax
Episodes: More or less sequenced and defined by the designer. Gamemaster may design additional episodes (or is prepared to improvise them) and must anticipate a variety of possible sequences that the players may choose.


OPEN-ENDED ADVENTURES
Setting
Possible Episodes: Some anticipated by the gamemaster or scenario designer, but most to be improvised by the gamemaster. Players have great power to define the problem and sequence. Gamemaster knowledge of setting and characters must be extensive and detailed. Climax cannot be anticipated.

2304

CTHULHU Companion

Ghastly Adventures & Erudite Lore



The *Cthulhu Companion* is a collection of new Cthulhu mythos lore, scenarios, and rules additions to the *Call Of Cthulhu* game. From this volume the investigators gain two new skills and a chance to encounter prehistoric monsters, find a missing uncle, stop cattle mutilations, and solve a kidnaping. The grim prisons of four continents plus new Cthulhu mythos deities, races, and monsters help the keeper propel the investigators to madness. Investigators will reel from new phobias and insanity types.

2304	Cthulhu Companion	$ 8.00
2010	Shadows of Yog-Sothoth	$10.00
2012	The Asylum	$10.00
2009-X	Call Of Cthulhu boxed game	$20.00

Available from Chaosium Inc., PO Box 6302, Albany CA 94706. Add $2 per order for postage & handling. California residents add appropriate 6% or 6½% sales tax. Allow 2-4 weeks for delivery.

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CALL of CTHULHU ADVENTURE

What's New

New products and publications for the adventure role-player. Game companies are encouraged to send samples of their new releases for announcement in this column.

NEW SYSTEMS

Superworld (Chaosium, Box 6302, Albany CA 94706, $20) by Steve Perrin. This is a superhero role-playing game. Comes boxed with three rulebooks: a 32-page "Superheroes Book," a 40-page "Superpowers Book," and a 40-page "Gamemasters Book." The rest of the components are: reference sheets, character sheets, and dice.

Timeship (Yaquinto, Box 24767, Dallas TX 75224, $?) by Herbie Brennan. This is a role-playing game of time travel. The 48-page rulebook comes with three scenarios: "Murder at the End of Time," "Destruction Of Gommorrah," and "Assassinate The Fuhrer." Comes boxed, the rest of the components are a gamemaster's screen, a pad of character sheets, play-aids, and dice.

Wizards' World (Fantasy Worlds Unlimited, Box 2033, Orange CA 92669, $10) by David Silvera and Douglas S. Krull. This 80-page book describes a fantasy role-playing game system with character classes and experience levels.

Roleplayer (Roleplayer Enterprises, Box 795, Los Altos CA 94022, $15) by Matthew P. King. This 196-page book describes a role-playing system for medieval and technological periods. There are sections on magic, psychic abilities, mutant powers, and technological weapons.

Outime (Valhalla Simulation Games, Box 4724, Sta E, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1S 5H9, $4) by Marc W.D. Tyrrell. This is a time-travel role-playing game involving what-if scenarios in alternate time worlds.

Stalking the Night Fantastic (Tri Tac, Box 61, Madison Hgts MI 48071, $13) by Richard Tucholka, et al. This is a 104-page book describing a supernatural role-playing game system. Players play members of Bureau 13, an ultra-modern force created to stem the growth of ancient magic and the supernatural that threaten the innocent world.

FOR ADVANCED D&D

Beyond the Crystal Cave (TSR, Box 756, Lk Geneva WI 53147, $?) by Dave J. Browne, et al. For character levels 4-7, this 32-page adventure involves a search for a pair of runaway star-crossed lovers.

Dungeonland (TSR, $?) by E. Gary Gygax. For character levels 9-12, this 32-page adventure has the adventurers suddenly finding themselves in an unknown world ready for dungeon-delving.

The Land Beyond the Magic Mirror (TSR, $?) by E. Gary Gygax. For character levels 9-12, this 32-page adventure is a sequel to *Dungeonland* (see above). Adventurers may start adventuring with this module or continue from *Dungeonland*.

FOR CALL OF CTHULHU

The Asylum and Other Tales (Chaosium, $10) edited by Sandy Petersen. This 80-page book contains seven scenarios that take the investigators, among other places, to an auction in Vienna, Austria, and a cruise across the Atlantic on the Mauretania.

FOR CAR WARS AND CHAMPIONS

Autoduel Champions (Steve Jackson Games, Box 18957, Austin TX 78760, $10) by Aaron Allston. This 64-page book comes with cardboard counters and a 32"x21" double-sided map. There are vehicle rules for *Champions*, rules for helicopters and superheroes for *Car Wars*, and a short scenario description.

FOR D&D EXPERT SET

Master of the Desert Nomads (TSR, $?) by David Cook. This 32-page adventure is for character levels 6-9. The adventurers are given a mission to travel beyond the Great Pass to the Temple of Death. There they must find the key that will determine the outcome of a great war.

FOR MORROW PROJECT

Operation Lucifer (Timeline, Box 11051, Lansing MI 48901, $6.95) by D. Patrick Beckfield and H.N. Voss. This 36-page adventure involves search through a 20,000 square mile wilderness area that was once the farmland of Wisconsin for a nuclear time bomb.

The Ruins of Chicago (Timeline, $6.95) by Bill Worzel. This 48-page adventure involves a search through the ruins of Chicago, battling cannibalistic clans, to find the wreckage of Northwestern University that may hold the key to stopping a war.

FOR RECON

Sayaret/Track Commander (RPG Inc., Box 485, Lincoln AR 72744, $5.98) by ?. This 52-page booklet describes Israeli combat units and their weaponry, and provides encounter situations.

FOR STAR FRONTIERS

Referee's Screen and Mini-Module (TSR, $?). This is a 25½"x11" play-aid displaying useful charts and tables. Also comes with an 8-page module by Mark Acres containing two scenarios that take place aboard a starship.

Knight Hawks (TSR, $?) by Douglas Niles. Basically a module for starships, it comes boxed with a 64-page campaign book, a 16-page tactical boardgame rules, 16-page scenario book for on-board adventures, 22½"x35" double-sided map, and 285 counters.

FOR STAR TREK

Witness for the Defense (FASA, Box 6930, Chicago IL 60608-6930, $6) by Guy W. McLimore, Jr. This 40-page adventure is a sequel to the *Star Trek* TV episode, "The Devil in the Dark." It involves an investigation into a murder case.

FOR TOP SECRET

Operation: Fastpass (TSR, $?) by Philip Taterczynski. This 32-page mission is for intermediate level agents. The mission is to help a communist code expert attending a conference in Budapest defect to a friendly country.

FOR TRAVELLER

Lee's Guide to Interstellar Adventure Volume 1 (Gamelords, 18616 Grosbeak Ter, Gaithersburg MD 20879, $?) by Gregory P. Lee. This 48-page booklet contains ten world descriptions with adventure possibilities for each world.

Exotic Atmospheres (GDW, Box 1646, Bloomington IL 61701, $?) by J. Andrew Keith. This 16-page booklet describes various types of atmospheres found in alien worlds which has been classified as exotic, corrosive, or insidious. Originally appeared as a pull-out in *The Journal 17*.

Veterans (GDW, $5) by Tim Brown. This 48-page booklet provides 234 pregenerated *Mercenary* characters. The characters are classified into tech levels.

Tarsus (GDW, $12) by Marc W. Miller and Loren K. Wiseman. This boxed module describes a colonial world beyond the frontiers of the Imperium. Comes with a 24-page data book, five 4-page scenario books, two 8½"x11" maps, a 17"x11" map, and twelve character cards.

FOR ANY SYSTEM

Harn (Columbia Games, Box 8006, Blaine WA 98230, $?) by N. Robin Crossby. This is a description of a fantasy world, an island about 1000 miles across. Comes in a folder with a 34"x22" map, a 32-page overview book, and a 64-page index of the world.

Northern Mirkwood (ICE, Box 1605, Charlottesville VA 22902, $?) by John David Ruemmler. This 52-page book describes a major forest in Tolkien's Middle Earth. Also comes with a 17"x 22" double-sided map.

Plague Of Terror (The Companions, 245 Water St, Bath ME 04530, $8.50) by Wm. John Wheeler. This 56-page book, second in the Brotherhood series, describes a small manor village that is the scene of several scenarios.

Brotherhood of the Bolt (The Companions, $8.50) by Wm. John Wheeler and Peter L. Rice. This 40-page book comes with three double-sided maps. It has three scenarios, one of which is a castle raid.

Street Of Gems (The Companions, $8.50) by Peter L. Rice. This 52-page book describes a port village that is the scene of several scenarios.

Village of Peddler's Ferry (ECI, Box 13190, Charlotte NC 28211, $3) by Bill Peschel. This 12-page book describes a small border town located at the junction of two rivers.

Long Live the King (ECI, $3) by Bill Peschel. This 16-page book describes an adventure to gain the throne of a kingdom with seven baronies through power politics.

Tarantis (Judges Guild, RR 8 Box 9, 1221 N Sunnyside Rd, Decatur IL 62522, $14.98) by Bob Bledsaw. For levels 2-6, comes as two 96-page books and three 20"x29" double-sided maps. It describes in detail much of a city-state located next to a bay at the mouth of a river.

MAGAZINES

Adventurers Club 1 (Hero Games, 92-A 21st Ave, San Mateo CA 94402, $2.50) edited by Steve Peterson. This 32-page digest-sized issue includes a *Champions* scenario, a superhero description, and a rules variant.

PLAY-BY-MAIL

Celevor (Steven Chabotte, Box 192, Wesleyan Sta, Middletown CT 06457) by Steven Chabotte. This is a fantasy play-by-mail role-playing game where the players play of seven character types: bard, fighter, healer, magician, priest, ranger, or thief. The 14-page rulebook and first two turns are $10, $2.50 per turn thereafter.

BOARDGAMES

Dark Nebula (GDW, $8) by Marc Miller. This is a science-fiction boardgame for two players involving strategic space combat. Comes boxed, the components are a 12-page rulebook, 120 counters, eight 5½"x8" geomorphic maps, and one die.

Combots (FASA, $15) by William Fawcett and Jordan Weisman. This is a tactical boardgame simulating robot combat. For two or more players, the game comes boxed with a 16-page rulebook, 17"x11" mounted map, metal parts enough for two robots, and dice.

Pentantastar (Adventure Games, 1278 Selby Ave, St Paul MN 55104, $19.95) by David Megarry, et al. This is a fantasy boardgame for 2-4 players. Comes boxed with 21"x28" map, 180 counters, 72 cards, an 8-page rulebook, an 8-page storybook, and play-aids. Victory may be accomplished either magically or militarily.

Silo 14 (Centurion Games, Box 10, Northfield NJ 08225, $9.95) by Neil A. Rosenberg. For 1-4 players, this is a tactical man-to-man boardgame simulating an attempt to stop terrorists from launching a missile that would start WW III. Comes boxed with an 8-page rulebook, 100 counters, a 17"x22" map, and dice.

Alien Armada (Centurion Games, $18) by Michael E. Crane, Jr. For 1-4 players, the basic situation of this strategic science-fiction boardgame involves saving the human worlds from alien invasion. Comes boxed, the components are a 12-page rulebook, 300 counters, a 34"x22" map, play-aids, and a die.

Barbarian, Kingdom & Empire (Icarus Games, Box 834, Urbana IL 61801, $?) by Erik Wilson. For 1-6 players, this is a strategic boardgame that simulates the barbarian conquest of Europe. Comes boxed with a 16-page rulebook, 600 counters, a 22"x28" map, play-aids, and dice.

Gladiator (Avalon Hill, 4517 Harford Rd, Baltimore MD 21214, $9) by Michael Matheny. For two players, this simulates the man-to-man tactical combat in the arenas of ancient Rome. Comes boxed with a 16-page rulebook, 16"x 11" map, 48 counters, a gladiator log pad, play-aids, and dice.

Wizard's Quest (Avalon Hill, $16) by Garrett J. Donner. This is a strategic fantasy boardgame for 2-6 players. The object of the game is to become king by retrieving three treasures hidden by the other competitors for the throne. Comes boxed with a 6-page rulebook, 24"x22" map, 400 counters, 35 cards, and dice.

ENDLESS QUEST BOOKS

Revolt of the Dwarves (TSR, $2) by Rose Estes. The plot of this paperback book involves saving the kingdom and rescuing a family from the revoling dwarves.

Revenge of the Rainbow Dragons (TSR, $2) by Rose Estes. The plot of this paperback book involves rescue of a master wizard trapped in the highest tower of a castle by three evil wizards.

COMPUTER GAMES

Galaxy (Avalon Hill, $20 cassette, $25 disk) by Tom Cleaver. This is a game of galactic conquest for 1-1-20 players. Comes boxed with a 4-page rulebook and a galaxy log pad.

OTHER GAMES

Lost Worlds (Nova, Box 1178, Manchester CT 06040, $11.95) by Alfred Leonardi. This is a man-to-man melee-combat game for two players. One player plays a man in chainmail with sword and shield and the other plays a skeleton with scimitar and shield.

Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective (Sleuth Publications, 2527 24th St, San Francisco CA 94110, $22) by ?. This is a detective game that comes in a binder. There are five separate books (rules, London directory, case book with ten cases, quiz book, newspaper archive), a map of London, and the loose-leaf clue book.

FOR SHERLOCK HOLMES CONSULTING DETECTIVE

The Mansion Murders (Sleuth Publications, $12) by ?. This module has five more cases that take place in a mansion. Comes in a folder with two maps of a mansion, a case book, a clue book, and a newspaper archive.

SOURCEBOOKS

The Armory's Buyers Guide to Fantasy Miniatures (The Armory, 4145 Amos Ave, Baltimore MD 21215, $7.95) edited by Richard M. Day and Bruce Cassick. Over 200-page long, this books has over 2000 illustrations of figures by Jim Taylor and Greg Barrett.

Ghastly Games (Delacorte Press, 1 Dag Hammarskjold Plz, New York NY 10017, $9.95) by John Astrop, This over-sized book contains twelve newly-designed boardgames for pre-teens. □

Sword of Hollywood

Cinema news and reports of interest to adventure role-players.

By Larry DiTillio

Hail all lovers of cinema! Did you have a good summer? I did, work-wise, but where movies and television were concerned, I have to admit some disappointment. The fantasy/science-fiction trend seems to be on a downhill course, judging by this summer's fare. Both Return of the Jedi *and* Superman III *were less than satisfying, and the rest of the fantastic genre like* Spacehunter *and* Krull *were less than just about anything.*

Outside of fantasy, there was *Wargames* (not too far outside of course); story-wise, its flaws were overwhelming, though I did enjoy its style.

Possibly the brightest gem of the summer was *Octopussy*, the latest James Bond epic. I thought it was one of the better Roger Moore efforts at Bondian derring-do (they'll never outdo those initial, hard-edged Sean Connery Bonds) and give it an unqualified go-see, especially for you spy-movie/spy-game fans.

In the few remaining weeks of summer, my guess is that *Fire And Ice* will be the big treat. I have never seen a film that had more going for it in terms of satisfying fantasy: Frank Frazetta paintings animated by Ralph Bakshi, playing out a script written by former *Conan* comic scripter Roy Thomas and his friend Gerry Conway (scripter for the DC comic *Firestorm*). That's got to be good right? Well, time will tell, but *Fire And Ice* opens August 26 so you should know whether I've called it right by the time you read this.

So much for summer, let's peek at what's coming our way from the bowels of Tinseltown.

Roger Corman Lays 'em Out: New World Pictures, the film company owned by Roger Corman, the King of the B pictures (*Little Shop of Horrors*, *Death Race 2000*, all those Vincent Price/Poe films, etc., etc.), has a barrel of action films ready to be dumped on our action-loving little hearts.

Coming the first week in September is *Deathstalker*, a wild-and-wooly sword & sorcery flick with dazzling special effects and make-up. One such effect is the drawing and quartering of a wicked sorcerer, seen in more than graphic detail.

Around the same time, New World should release a science-fiction space opera epic titled *Space Raiders*.

For you *Aftermath* game nuts, New World is beginning production on a post-holocaust adventure titled *Stryker* in which women control the entire world's water supply.

For horror buffs, New World has *The Pit*, a movie about a lonely schoolboy who gets even with bullies by feeding them to some horrible man-eating creatures. You may see this in late September, when it is scheduled for test marketing (films sometimes are opened in odd towns all over the U.S. to test their effect on audiences before a wider opening is scheduled).

Last on the New World agenda is *Escape 2000*, a story about a human foxhunt, in which hunters become the hunted. Take it for what it's worth, or avoid it and read the short story "The Most Dangerous Game," which is the grandaddy of all hunters-become-hunted stories.

Title Change: I mentioned a 3-D film about killer dogs a couple of columns ago. It was then called *Rottweiler*. I suppose the distributors realized that most people would not know what *Rottweiler* meant because they recently switched the title to *Dogs Of Hell*. It opens around Halloween. Nothing like watching dogs tear people to shreds in three dimensions, eh?

Way, Way in the Future: The title is *2010*. Want to guess what it's a sequel to? If you said *2001*, you are absolutely right. And if you said anything else, please see a doctor. Anywho, according to MGM, *2010* will be released to eager audiences in Christmas 1984. If you can't wait, pick up Arthur C. Clarke's novel of the same name, which has recently been published. That way you can really anticipate the film.

Dirty Harry's Back: For fans of the hard-case detective film, everybody's favorite hard-case is back on the scene in a brand new epic called *Sudden Impact*. It opens December 9. Clint Eastwood is of course playing the role of Dirty Harry Callahan again. Violence will be the major theme of the film for certain. Why do you think they call him Dirty Harry?

Mini-Review: Those of you who subscribe to SHOWTIME, the cable TV network, probably tuned in this August to a series called *Prisoners of the Lost Universe*. The plot can be summed up very briefly—Handsome Hero and Beautiful Girl go through dimensional portal to bring back vanished scientist. On other end of said portal is a fantasy universe, with an evil warlord, dwarves, elves (they painted him green, but take my word for it, the man is an elf), and neanderthals. In terms of story, you'll recognize numerous sources, particularly an almost direct robbery of the "hero team" from *Hawk The Slayer*. Production values are just about nil, the whole show has a flat, TV look.

So why am I mentioning it? The fights are great, exciting, well-choreographed, and full of hack n' slash action (remember, cable doesn't have any restrictions on that sort of stuff); and the characters are interesting and funny, even though they are derivative. So if you have a buddy who gets SHOWTIME, tell him or her to watch for it and catch an episode. You may not be blown away, but it's better than most network stuff.

In Progress: The success of *Superman* not only led to two sequels, but has now spawned yet another superheroic film by the same company. It is called *Supergirl* and stars unknown Helen Slater in the title role. It began shooting in England in April.

April also saw the start of shooting on *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*. Locations for that much-awaited sequel are Sri Lanka, Hong Kong, Macao, and London.

And last but not least, *Dune* is finally underway, shooting in Mexico City. Starring will be Max Von Sydow and Sting (the lead singer of The Police, now venturing into the acting game).

Talk about silly: Well Pac Man became a Saturday morning cartoon show, so I suppose it should be no surprise that other video games would be tapped for the cartoon market. But *Frogger*?!? Yes folks, it's no lie, *Frogger*, the game where a frog must be rushed across a highway without getting flattened by a semi, is now on the boards for fall. Beats me how they're going to make it work, but I guess anything can be done with a little imagination and somebody who is willing to spend money.

The return of ILM: Industrial Light and Magic, the sensational special effects shop which produced much of the magic in the *Star Wars* saga is slated to create a staggering array of wild effects for a new television show concerning video games. No title available yet, but the idea is based on *Tron* and will feature a young fella who is sucked into the computer each week to play real-life video games against the malevolent machine.

Who was that ferret? Upcoming on NBC next season is a somewhat unusual show called *Manimal*. It concerns a grogeous police detective (played by Melody Anderson) who teams up with a noted criminologist (played by Simon McCorkindale) to solve various mysteries. What makes it unusual? Well, said criminologist is capable of transforming himself into a variety of animals. This, I believe, is the first shape-shifting hero since *The Shaggy Dog* and though I have my doubts, it sounds interesting enough for me to tune in at least once.

Personal Business: A letter to me from Mr. David A. Kraklow of Illinois asked that I check out the whereabouts of a film called *Cry Of Cthulhu*. The film was mentioned last in *Heavy Metal* in 1979, promising a 1981 release through Paramount Pictures. Well, since I am always willing to help a fan (I seem to have so few), I began private-eyeing on this assignment. I first checked Paramount Studios. Put simply, they never heard of it. I then tried to find Cinema Vista, the company cited as making the film. They are not listed in any of the usual channels.

In short David, I wouldn't count on seeing *Cry Of Cthulhu* soon. From the rundown you gave me, I will postulate what happened. The film was shot and the producers couldn't find a distributor, so it's now sitting somewhere on a shelf, awaiting a deal. I will keep trying to track it down and let you know if I come up with any more info.

If any of you other Sword of Hollywood fans have a similar itch to learn about something, I'll try my best to accomodate. Just write me c/o *Different Worlds*.

Well, that is the news from Lost Angels for now. Watch for the new releases and keep on playing those games. □

Film Review

Reviews of outstanding feature films of interest to adventure role-players. Good movies are indispensable sources of good ideas for gaming.

KRULL

Director . . . . . Peter Yates
Producer . . . . . Ron Silverman
Screenplay . . . Stanford Sherman
Music . . . . . James Horner
Photography . . . Peter Suschitzky

CAST

Colwyn . . . . . Ken Marshall
Lyssa . . . . . Lysette Anthony
Ynyr . . . . . Freddie Jones

Reviewed by John Nubbin

Bad movies, they just go on and on. What has happened in Hollywood is beyond me. Why the notion that we are all ignorant persists is something I simply cannot fathom; but persist it does. It would have to, for a film as nonsensical as *Krull* to get released.

The (for lack of a better word) Story: the Beast, a platicine cross between Alien and Cthulhu, comes to the planet Krull, to conquer, enslave, and bore audiences as he supposedly has done on a million worlds in the past. His rock tree stump spacecraft lands on Krull, and he dispatches his mighty horde of twenty riders to take over the planet. Apparently, they do, all except for two tiny little nothing kingdoms. The tiny littles decide to ban together to destroy the Beast. Once the prince of Tiny marries the princess of Little, their combined armies will be sent after their foe.

The only problem is the Beast desires the princess, and so sends his tens of riders to destroy the two combined armies and capture the princess. Unlike the subjugation of Krull, we do get to see this battle, as the stretch-pants hero and his science-fiction armored knights battle the score; they lose quickly, though, being the worst fantasy fighters since the Roman soldiers in *The Three Stooges Meet Hercules*. Of course, the hero is only rendered unconscious, unlike the knights who are all slaughtered. The princess is taken to the Beast, and everything looks bleak.

But then, in comes the old man who is not a wizard but might be, who knows of a weapon, and a place of power, and an even older old man who knows more magic, and more places of power; they go and get the weapon, and get the even older old man killed, and meet a cyclops, and head off for another place of power (this one the home of an old woman who seems to be some kind of magician, too), and on and on.

The movie simply bogs down into too many grey questions: how do the normal men running at normal speeds catch horses which can run at super speed? How do they stay on the backs of horses which can run at super speed? Why can't the Beast's army beat the clowns the hero pulls together after having beaten the collective armies of a planet (let alone the collective armies of a million planets)? Why do the hero and the old man go after the weapon when it does no good against the villain? How is it that the hero and heroine can create magic by touching their hands when neither of them knows the slightest things about magic? And on and on.

Like so many of the trivial, unthought out, forced collections of science-fiction and fantasy cliches we have had foisted on us since *Star Wars*, *Krull* is an expensive, but unexpressive meander which says nothing to the audience except "Well, we got your money and you got nothin', again." The special effects range from interesting to spectacular, but as good graphics alone do not make a good comic book, so do fancy special effects do not make a film.

The action in *Krull* ranges from very good to just silly. Freddie Jones, when one can hear what he has to say over the audience's laughing (at the film, not him) delivers a first rate performance. Lysette Anthony, the newcomer with the more than slightly difficult job of playing the helpless, beautiful young thing does an outstanding job. Although most of what she is given to say is fairly meaningless, she does a better than average job of delivering it.

Anthony looks to be just another of the graduates of the "I'm beautiful; watch me breathe" school of actresses, but is not. She cleverly distracts the audience with the eyes and movements, forcing them to concentrate on what she is doing, rather than the way costuming cut her gowns. She is as good as an actress her age (not yet twenty at the time of filming) can possibly be, which is far more than a whimpering folly like *Krull* deserves.

Ken Marshall, on the other hand, could not have found a better home. Seeming to have made a career for himself as the worst-thing-in-big-budget-productions (he was Marco Polo last year for NBC), he is as hammy and preening as ever here; he brings a foolishness and childish arrogance to the role of Colwyn that may have been calculated by some pool-side producer/lawyer/accountant to thrill adolescent hearts everywhere, since it worked for Indiana Jones, but one important thing was forgotten. The slight foolish streak in Jones worked because it was a defense mechanism, one he slipped into for about two minutes of the film. The rest of the time, Jones was a thinking, intelligent hard-hitting man. Even though we in the audience, when we stopped to think about it, knew nothing was going to happen to Jones, Jones never knew that. His understanding of his own mortality made him real.

Colwyn, on the other hand, knows from the first moment we see him until the last that he is indestructible. He can never be beaten, no matter how many of his friends and companions die around him. He is a grinning, foolish boy, playing at being a hero, never once giving us a thought that the supposedly unstoppable, unbeatable menace he is after will be able to part his hair let alone do him any damage.

On the plus side, we do have some fine performances in the second string section, but they are helplessly lost since Marshall's inane mugging never ceases. The little boy, the silly magician and the cyclops, as well as the bandit leader and several of his fellows are all fine. Unfortunately, Colwyn is in every scene they are, and brings down whatever they might have to offer to his level.

Direction and editing suffer from lack of purpose. It is hard to tell where the overall blame should be laid. Many of the scenes seem well directed, but they go nowhere; they do not lead one into the other, nor do they seem to follow any pattern. The editors, on the other hand, with little to work with, have strung things together as best they could. Their best, though, is tragically lacking.

The reason the editor and director look so bad must lie within the scripting, they will tell you. *The story was so bad we couldn't do anything with it—we tried, but it was no go.*

And then, it is merely who you want to believe. Did the director change things to suit his own vision? Did the editors decide something was too this or too that, and leave it on the floor? Maybe the writer did a bad job, or maybe an excellent fantasy script was torn to shreds by the merchant dogs, hoping that by changing this and that they could make this new bone they'd dug up smell like one of the ones they liked in the past, and thus be able to gnaw it one more time.

Blame is a hard label to make stick in the film business, and a meaningless one in the end. The real point is, there will only be so many inspired films in a genre in any given year. One new idea, like *Star Wars*, or *Raiders*, or *Road Warrior*, etc., will always generate imitators, because the only thing an imitator can do is copy. It was always hard to pre-pick winners in the past; now that the art of theater preview-making has advanced to the point where the trailers themselves are often better than the movie, it is almost impossible to know if a film is good or bad before you enter the theater.

With the advent of home video, however, more and more rotten films will be going down the tube quicker as people wait for them to come on HBO, or in rentable form. Until the day comes, though, when every movie produced for theaters is great, because they cannot afford to make a mistake, films like *Krull* will continue to be made. □

Photos courtesy Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc.

A Letter from Gigi

Adventure gaming news and gossip from the nosiest gamer-reporter in the world, Gigi D'Arn.

Dear Tadashi,

Back on the helm, eh? But we're back to a bimonthly schedule. Your readers will now have to wait a whole two months between my intriguing columns. The saga of *Different Worlds* continues. . .

Avalon Hill appears to be attacking their no-role-playing-game blues in earnest. They have, along with *Perils & Plunder*, Chaosium's *RuneQuest*, and Victory Games' *James Bond 007*, another role-playing game in preparation. By TOM MOLDVAY, it is called *Lords Of Creation*. It will be a universal role-playing system for use in any setting but it will not be a "generic" system, claiming to have its own consistent theme. It was previewed in this year's GENCON.

Speaking of *James Bond 007*, Victory Games planned to have the first six products for the game to appear all at once. Well, it seems they have succeeded. All six items should appear nationwide this October. Don't you wish all game companies were as timely? Game companies are notorious for their production delays—it's about time they realized that the gamers are not going to put up with it very long. Afterall, it's only a hobby to most of them and there are many other things to divert their attention.

Among the winners this year of the Strategist Club Awards, announced at GENCON, were *Star Frontiers* for best role-playing game, *Champions II* for best supplement, *The Dragon* for best magazine (surprised?), and *Fantasy Lords* by Grenadier for best miniatures. Congratulations to all.

Did TSR get the rights to a game based on FRITZ LEIBER's *Lankhmar* series? I thought Chaosium had the rights.

Blade announces that their next *Mercenaries, Spies & Private Eyes* adventure will be *Stormhaven* to appear "hopefully" before the end of summer. Their *Citybook II* is titled *Port-O'-Call* and is also due sometime near the end of summer. Well, the end of summer has come and gone, but neither product has.

TSR-does-it-again time: Last column I reported that in their most recent firings TSR kept everyone in their game design department. Well, there was another series of firings and this time it did include some members of the game design department including TOM WHAM. Now aren't you glad you didn't apply for a job there?

Hero game recently moved their office to a seedier part of town; they are now right next to a massage parlor. Is that where they get all their cute help for game cons?

You can expect to see another fantasy/science-fiction gaming magazine soon. This time from Canada, it will be called *The Black Sword*. Edited by SEAN E. CARLEY, I've yet to see the first issue, however.

Clemens & Associates announces that they will begin to add new quadrants at regular intervals to their *Universe II* play-by-mail game. The four present quadrants have yet to be totally explored but requests from players to open the game up a little more have forced the company to expand the universe.

I doubt it personally, but Mayfair still claims they will get the rights to do the Marvel superhero role-playing game. I've heard rumors that Marvel was having problems dealing with TSR's lawyers so who knows? They may be right afterall.

Guess who Rumour saw recently coming out of a Beverly Hills restaurant wearing a *Call Of Cthulhu* T-shirt? It was E. GARY GYGAX. I guess he must be a fan of the game, either that or he feels it appropriate to wear it in Hollywood-land.

Speaking of Cthulhu, Chaosium's supply of *Call Of Cthulhu* T-shirts was ripped off from their shipment to the GATEWAY game con in Anaheim. Cthulhu strikes again!

What are the records of various game companies in paying their royalties? Any disgruntled game designers?

What do Avalon Hill's notepads say on the bottom? "Nothing happens until it's written." What else would you expect from a printer-based company?

Another *Dungeons & Dragons*-related suicide? 16-year old IRVING LEE (BINK) PULLING II of Ashland, Virginia, committed suicide last year, allegedly due to a curse laid on his character while playing in a *D&D* game that was part of his school's extra-curricular activity. His parents in a $1 million suit against the school alleged that the curse was "intended to inflict emotional distress upon him at a time when he . . . was already under extreme psychological stress and emotional pressure from playing the game." The parents are suing the school's principal for allowing the game to be played even though he was aware of its "potential dangers." The parents have not sued the publishers of the game, TSR.

There is an interesting *Call Of Cthulhu* campaign being played in New York. Its players include John Nubbin (*DW* film reviewer), Robert M. Price (editor of *Crypt Of Cthulhu* fanzine), Gahan Wilson (famous cartoonist), and James Warhola (Andy Warhol's nephew—a famous artist on his own right, his art adorns covers of several science-fiction novels). Cthulhu gamers of the world unite!

Schubel & Son recently boasted that their *StarMaster* must "undoubtedly be the most successful" play-by-mail game in history, grossing over $250,000 since the game was first run. Flying Buffalo counters that they have recently started their 800th *Starweb* game. Since each *Starweb* game always starts with 15 players, there has been 12,000 player-positions and over 150,000 turns processed. Flying Buffalo estimates that *Starweb* has grossed over $350,000, closer to $400,000. Whew! That's a lot of bucks to be made in a business with no significant inventory to worry about, albeit labor-intensive. Computers are here to stay.

Is Chaosium's first *Stormbringer* module going to be titled *Ponds of Pan Tang*? Gimme a break!

Since Avalon Hill is going to have their hands full with role-playing games, they are planning to publish a fantasy gaming magazine. They are still looking for a title and an editor. They have reserved 25% of it to be filled with *RuneQuest* material.

Is it true that TSR is working on a Scientology role-playing game?

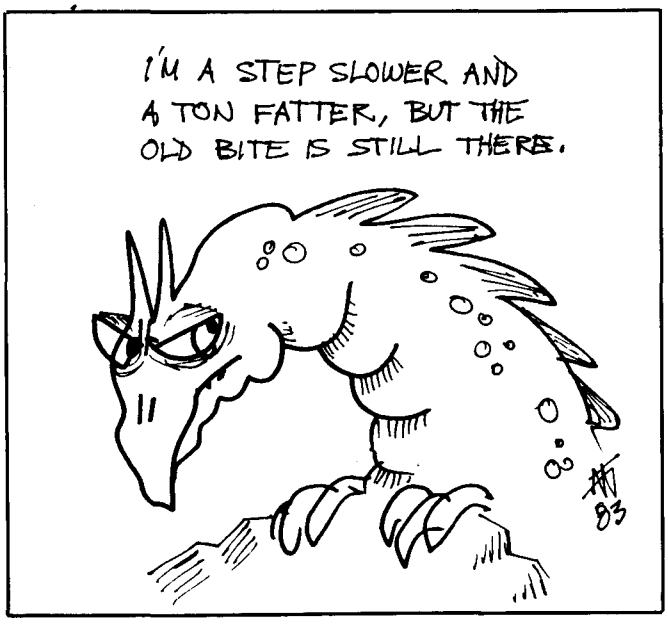
In Chaosium's *Superworld* game, one of its scenarios refers to a ship smuggling hashish named "Indoasa Maru." Looking in my Japanese-English dictionary, *Indoasa* means *India grass*. Now did you have anything to do with that, Tadashi?

Recent quote from my favorite comic strip character HAGAR THE HORRIBLE: "Ignorance is the mother of adventure."

Love,

Gigi

If you have any juicy gossip about our hobby, please write a "Note to Gigi," c/o *Different Worlds* Magazine, PO Box 6302, Albany CA 94706. I just love gossip—like who's-sleeping-with-whom, etc. You can even make them up! They don't have to be true, I just won't report on the false ones (but I usually do if it's humorous, or if the hypothesis is interesting). Just make sure the gossip is dripping with juiciness. □



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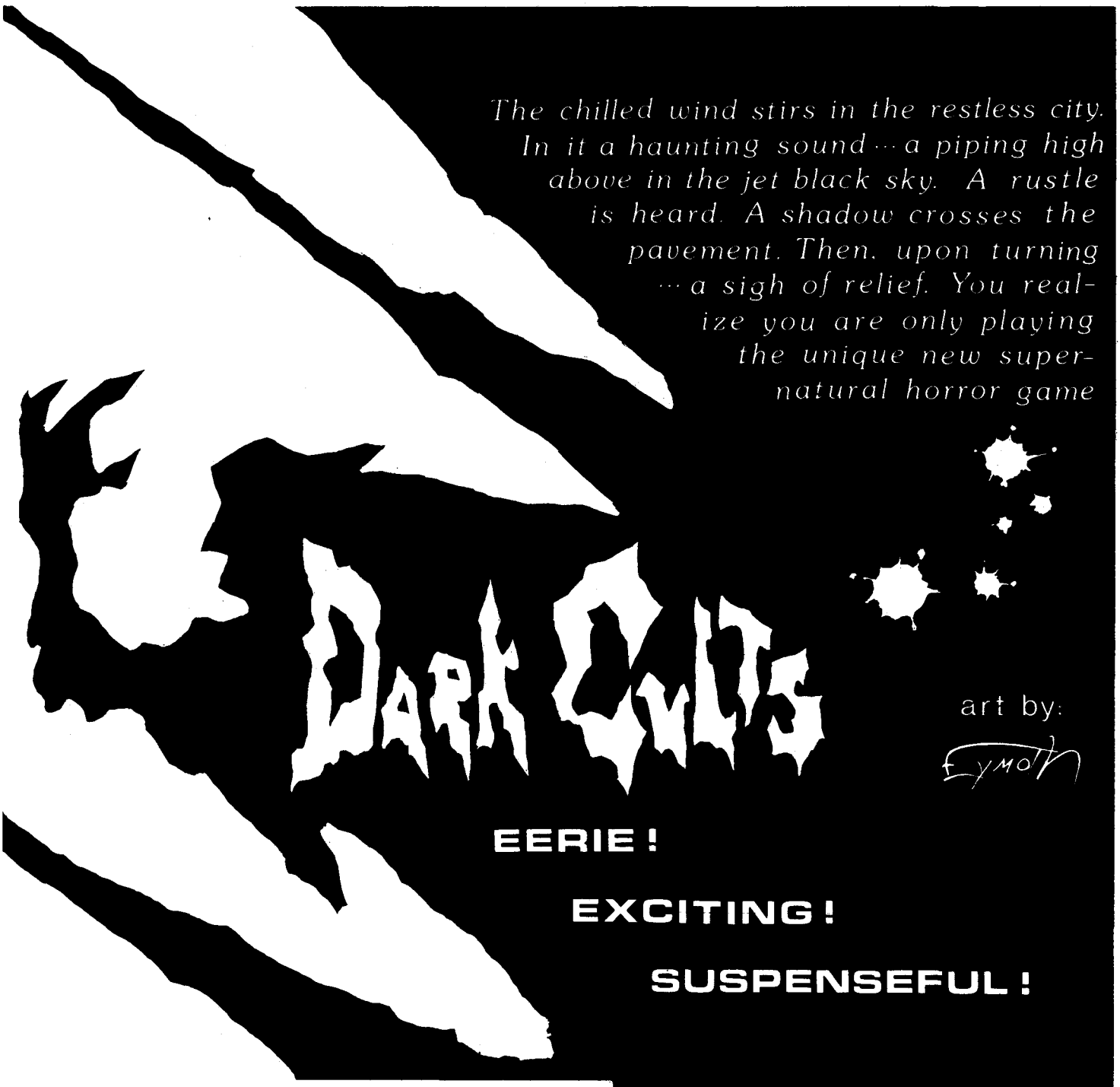

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